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# CONTENTS

## FEATURES


Tre Johnson
A gentle and fiercely
determined hero **23**

Is it Easier
for Women to Hide? **36**


## DEPARTMENTS


**Health**
Condom Use **15**

**Spirituality**
The Body Temple **10**

**Relationships**
Come Out of
the Second Closet **28**

**Arts**
Afrikenetic **9**

**Education**
Brothers Back-2-Back **26**

**Entertainment**
Plays for your
"must see" list **34**


## COLUMNS


What's Going on in
Your Life? **18**


## CALENDARS


Community **42**
National Events **44**
Bars **39**

Venus™

April 1995
Vol. 1 No. 4

| | |
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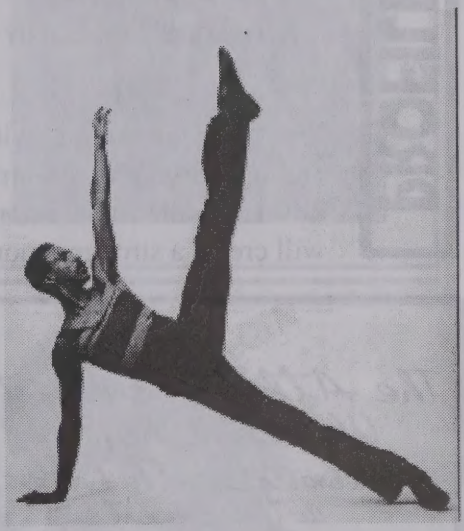

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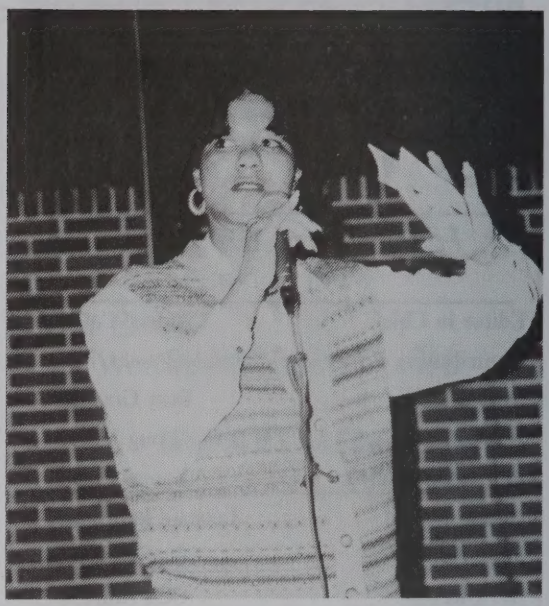
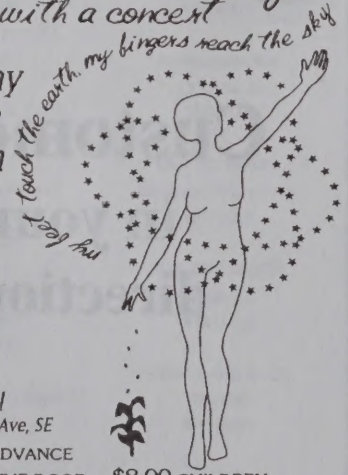


Traci came to Atlanta with a vision to provide a social, entertaining, and networking environment for the women of our community. She now heads the Atlanta chapter of Sisters of 30 Something Special. " We will create a stronger, more connected and unified sisterhood."


*The Atlanta Feminist Womens Chorus celebrates Earth Day with a concert*

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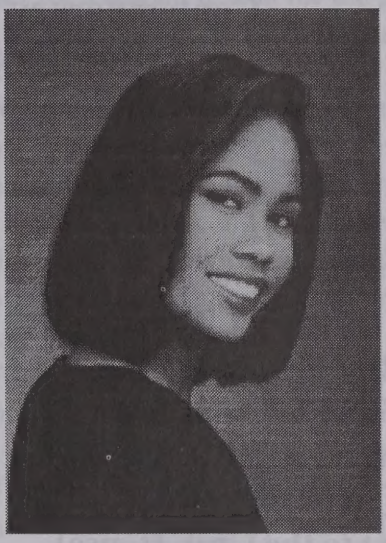

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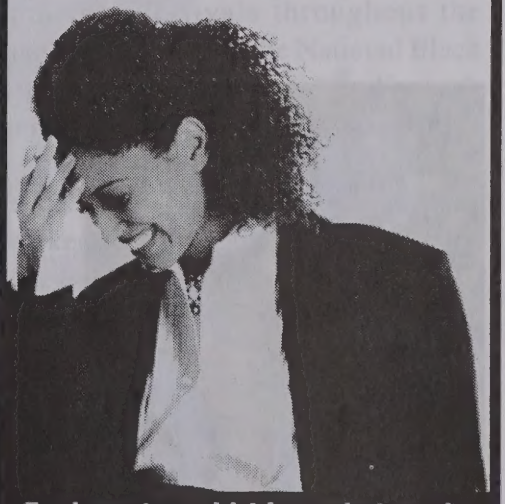

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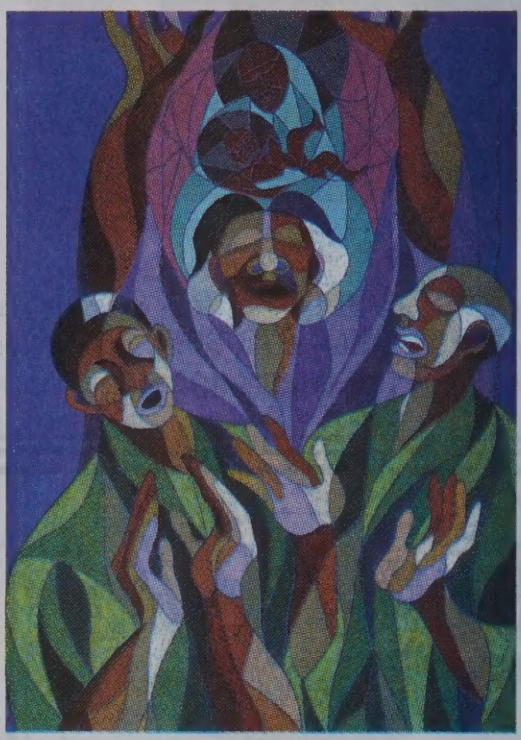

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# ARTS

## AFRIKINETIC
### THE MOVEMENT OF AFRIKA!

AFRIKINETIC, the dancer's diaspora where movement, percussion and interpretation are reunited will debut in Atlanta, February 5,1995. It is an originally copyrighted term which describes this new approach to Afrikan dance. AFRI-(from the word afrika) and KINETIC-(meaning movement). Thus, AFRIKINETIC—The movement of Afrika.

Afrikan dance has a cultural function designed to support and preserve values of the community. The practice of the dance is sacred since it is engaging in an ancestral continuum based upon vital components of an Afrikan reality.

This technique emphasizes the relationship between dance, drum, tradition and spirit AFRIKINETIC seeks to elevate Afrikan dance by showing the special relationship between the dancer's movement, drummer's rhythm, ancestral mission (tradition) for performing the dance and the indigenous life force (spirit) which Permeates this collective experience.

With an emphasis upon folkloric tradition, AFRIKINETIC will bridge the void between movement and interpretation. This multi-faceted approach allows the dancer to realize the uniqueness of the movement as one of tribal/familial customs. Therefore, this approach deepens and strengthens one's understanding of the dance. It is the specific movement of a particular people focused together for a certain reason for the good of the community. It is ritual dance movement.

The instructor, Waleed Elkan has been performing Afrikan dance for sixteen years in addition to supplementing his work via independent studies of Afrikan culture, folklore and religion. He is a graduate of Emerson College and began his Afrikan Dance studies with DeAlma Battle with The Art of Black Dance and Music in Boston.

Upon relocating to Atlanta, he performed with the Afrikan Dance Ensemble studying directly under Teteh Adagho, the 1991 Bronze Jubilee Recipient for Dance, He has performed in numerous festivals throughout the Southeast, including the National Black Arts Festival, Piedmont Arts Festival, and the International Dance Festival. He has also spent time in Managua where he taught at the Sandinista Cultural Workers Institute in Nicaragua. Waleed was instrumental in the creation of Adebonajo Afrikan Dance Theatre and the Madieo Afrikan Dance Ensemble here in Atlanta. He has also taught Afrikan Dance at Georgia State University.

**AFRIKINETIC**
**THE MOVEMENT OF AFRIKA**

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Waleed Elkan
Instructor
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# THE BODY TEMPLE

*by Kamau Ifoma*

*"God made it, God love everything you love - and a mess of stuff you don't But more than anything else, God love admiration...I think it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it... people think pleasing God is all God care about. But any fool living in the world can see it always trying to please us back."*

*The wise words of Shug Avery*
*from "THE COLOR PURPLE"*
*by Alice Walker*

How many times in your life have you heard the scripture which states that your body is the temple of God. It is to be cherished and worshipped and cared for with the same respect and care that you would give to your God.

I can remember as a child wondering if they were really talking about my body. Had they ever even seen my body? A little pudgy here. Uncoordinated there. Pimples a bit of everywhere. And this is the 'temple of God?' What God would want to live in this? (and when those issues of sex and sexuality began to surface), My question transformed to 'why would God want to live in this house of sin?'

My question, spoken loudly (in the silence of my soul), began to beat on me with the vigor and intensity of one 'good ole bashing'. I, who had always held a strong consciousness of loving myself, was now beginning to question the validity of that love. As my question turned into pain and my pain into fear, I began to dislike and neglect the 'temple' in which my God lives. Just as a house, which is neglected, becomes unprotected from the elements of self-hatred, low self-esteem and poor self-body image. With the frame, outer covering and windows of my temple shattered my soul became dis-eased (not-at-ease).

It was around this time that something wonderful happened. I was fresh out of college, working in the mental health profession. I was teaching adolescents how to be mentally healthy; how important it was to love themselves, unconditionally, regardless of what everyone around them may be saying or thinking of them, loving themselves, the whole self, was the only remedy to their healing.

There is an old African proverb that says, "if you are in hiding, don't light

a fire." With each piece of advice that I would give to one of the adolescents, I would also spark another flame within myself. A flame that began to expose the unworthiness that I felt for myself. I became hungry for a means of freeing myself from this temple of doom. I soon became a student of the self-help methods which I was offering to my clients. The methods which simply say; we must love our whole self unconditionally.

---

It's not enough to want to love yourself. It's not enough to dream of a body image that you could or would love, if you could have it. You must learn to love yourself just as you are.

---

You must learn to love your 'body temple' just as it is. Loving yourself and your body, right now, gives you permission to begin the process of expressing the love you've got inside and wearing it on the outside. The body is the protector of all that you are within. The body is also the first image of your true inner self that you and others see. When you harbor feelings of being unworthy or unprotected the body breaks down. With nothing to protect or 'show off', the body has little reason to be its best. It has no reason to be a Taj Mahal. It becomes a shack.

As a shack you have no purpose. You are just there. You allow anyone or anything to treat you anyway. You may say to yourself, 'love doesn't live here, so it matters not how you treat me. It's OK to abuse me physically, mentally and emotionally. You're only doing to me, outwardly, what I am doing to myself, inwardly.' As the Taj Mahal you are a 'symbol' of beauty, strength and longevity. No one or nothing can abuse or take advantage of you because you house the ruler of your universe, you! Now you can say, 'I am the love that lives here. I treat myself with respect, trust, patience and joy. You can only be a visitor here if you treat me the same.'

Always remember that you are created by and in the image and likeness of the divine. This makes you Divine. You should worship your temple and its contents 24-7-365! Don't 'piss God off' by not noticing the beauty that you express. Whenever and as often as possible get in the mirror naked and love yourself. Physically and emotionally naked. Allow yourself to be in awe of this creation which is being expressed as you. Look yourself over, completely. Don't miss a spot. And love every bit of it. You will never truly love yourself without loving your body, as well. Be a symbol of beauty, strength and longevity and call it YOU!

LET'S EACH AFFIRM:

MY BODY IS THE PERFECT EXPRESSION OF MY INNER BEAUTY. IT IS MY TEMPLE OF THE DIVINE. IT IS THE TRUE REPRESENTATION OF LOVE!

---

*Kamau Ifoma is a freelance writer and founder of Home Free Ministry.*

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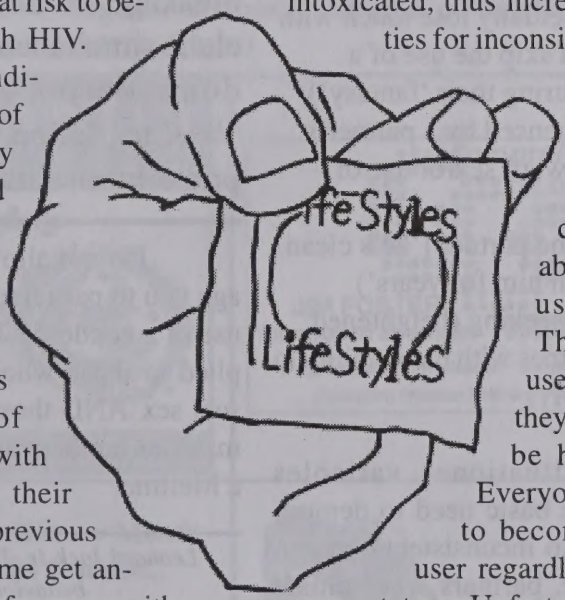
# HEALTH

# CONDOM USE

## THERE IS NO ROOM FOR NEGOTIATION!

It has been asked why condom use is compromised repeatedly. Why are many individuals on a road leading to self-destruction? Why are many who travel this self-destructive path so determined to take other unwanted passengers with them? What is really going on?

First, most individuals at risk do not perceive they are at risk to becoming infected with HIV. Although studies indicate that knowledge of AIDS is exceptionally high among gay and bisexual African-American men. Many black gay men, however, have negative attitudes about the use of condoms and react with intense anger when their partners ask about previous sexual contacts. Some get angry when a partner refuses sex without a condom. Others may perceive (the use of) comdoms as interference with foreplay and sexual pleasure.




The use of comdoms falls into three basic categories: non-users, sporadic users, and ritualistic users. Non-users are individuals who may be less confident in their ability to discuss condoms or to insist on their use with a sexual partner. Sporadic users are individuals who use condoms inconsistently.

Both non-users and sporadic users are more likely to have multiple sex partners. They may also have sex while intoxicated, thus increasing opportunities for inconsistent or improper use. Ritualistic users are individuals who are able to clearly communicate about the important use of condoms. They insist on its use consistently and they are less likely to be heavy drinkers. Everyone should strive to become a ritualistic user regardless of your HIV status. Unfortunately, for some gay and bisexual men, knowing that their HIV status is negative has been perceived as a 'green light' to continue business as usual — unprotected sex and multiple partner.

Among African-American gay

and bisexual men, some reasons for NOT using a condom may include:

1) Being in a steady relationship ('we've been together 2 years')
2) Being unprepared ('it just happened')
3) Being irresponsible ('couldn't be bothered')
4) Using alcohol and/or other drugs while having sex.
5) Being bisexual (a bisexual man may not perceive his level of risk as being that of a homosexual, when in actuality a bisexual man offers 'double jeopardy' by possi bly infecting or being infected by individuals on both sides of the fence.)
6) Perceiving the sexual partner as extremely attractive (some black gay & bisexual men get so caught up in their partner's good looks that they actually lose touch with reality and skip the use of a condom during their 'fantasy')
7) Being influenced by a partner's attitude toward sex/or use of condoms.
8) Knowing the partner ('he's clean. I've known him for years')
9) Sensation seeking (heightened arousal comes with the inability to think clearly)

These situational variables coupled with the basic need to demonstrate trust lead to inconsistent condom use. Commonly, partners who initiate condom use early in a relationship will eventually abandon use with the longevity of the relationship.

Condom norms, or patterns of use, have been established and have been very difficult to change over the past five years. There are still African-American men who feel they have 'messed up once, twice, many times' by not using a condom. This prior sexual history, along with the fear of getting tested and knowing that there IS NO cure for AIDS, has left some African-American gay and bisexual men feeling lost and hopeless. This dilemma may fuel a continued downward spiral to self-destruction as evident by no changes in inappropriate sexual behaviors.

There is absolutely no room for negotiation. Condoms should be used every time any form of sexual intimacy (oral, vaginal and anal sex) is experienced.

---

It is equally as critical to use the condom correctly, because incorrect use may lead to slipping or breakage. Some improper uses include simultaneous use of two condoms during sex, and use of Vaseline, lotion, or other inappropriate lubricants.

---

Do not allow anyone to encourage you to participate in sex without the use of a condom. This rule must be applied to those who are engaging in casual sex AND those who would like to maintain a monogamous relationship for a lifetime.

---

*Leonard Jack,Jr., Ph.D. is a health and behavior scientist*

Photo by: Ron Singleton

**These glowing sisters enjoyed the National Black Bay and Lesbian Summit earlier this year in Los Angeles, including Atlanta's Pat Hussain (2nd from left), and L.A.'s Ruth Waters, (right).**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# WHAT'S GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE?

"What's Going on in Your Life" is a column directed toward a more positive understanding of the issues and concerns you may encounter in day-to-day living. Whether that be job, relationships or individual personal goals...

**So tell us - - What's going on in your life?**

## Dear Geanie,

I'm a 24 year old male happily engaged to a wonderful young lady who vows to spend the rest of her life with me. However, when I was 16 another male about 2 years older then I took advantage of me. I have to admit I did enjoy it. I kept that our secret. Last week I told my best friend I was engaged. He hugged me and congratulated me. He then shared with me that he's bisexual. I was stunned. Since then he has made many passes and I have found myself wanting him. He doesn't know that I want him as much as he wants me, but I do love my girl.

What I'm asking is should I tell him how I feel about him and take the chance to ruin my relationship or should I just let him continue to come on to me and I play like it's not happening and marry the girl I love?

**Confused**

## Dear Confused,

You have labeled yourself, whether you are clearly aware or not, VERY accurately.

When you were sixteen you were molested by an adult. The issue here is not wether it was pleasurable or not, but that someone took advantage of you. This can confuse your sexual identity, confuse your feelings, and confuse appropriate boundaries, to name a few.

This "secret" has a profound effect on your life ongoing. This needs to be worked through.

It is apparent that you remain sexually attracted to your best friend. Whether this represents bisexual or true homosexual

feelings is a matter for exploration in an appropriate setting, namely counseling. Please understand that sexual attraction, had you been attracted to another female, would be somewhat less complicated. This situation would be purely sexual attraction and I would request that you respond to your one-on-one commitment promises to your fiancee'. However, this appears to be more than sexual attraction and may bring into play "Sexual identity" issues. It would be emotionally destructive for the two of you to live an untrue heterosexual existence with your true yearnings completely or partially elsewhere. And, her expectations that ALL of your inner yearnings are with her.

The healthiest course would be to enter counseling and explore "Same sex" yearnings. This would be your premarital task.

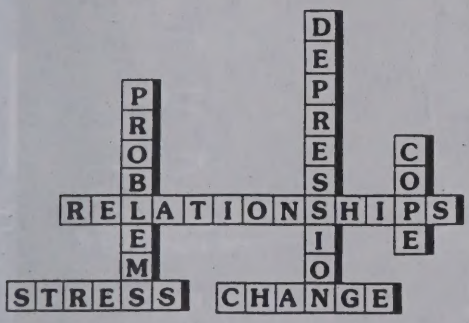
Then you and your psychotherapist/counselor could speak to whether or not it would be advisable to act on these feelings. As well as, the necessity to reveal these feelings to your fiancee'.

---

*Geanie Bond is a licensed psychotherapist in private practice in the Atlanta area. Address your letters to: Venus Magazine, P.O. Box 89238, Atlanta, Ga. 30312 or fax: (404) 622-8089*

---


**When Life Becomes A Puzzle..**

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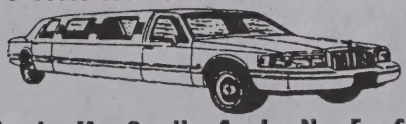

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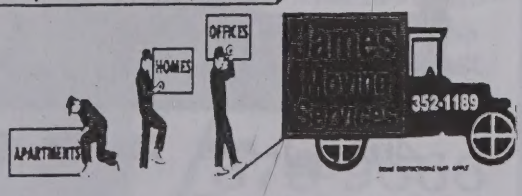

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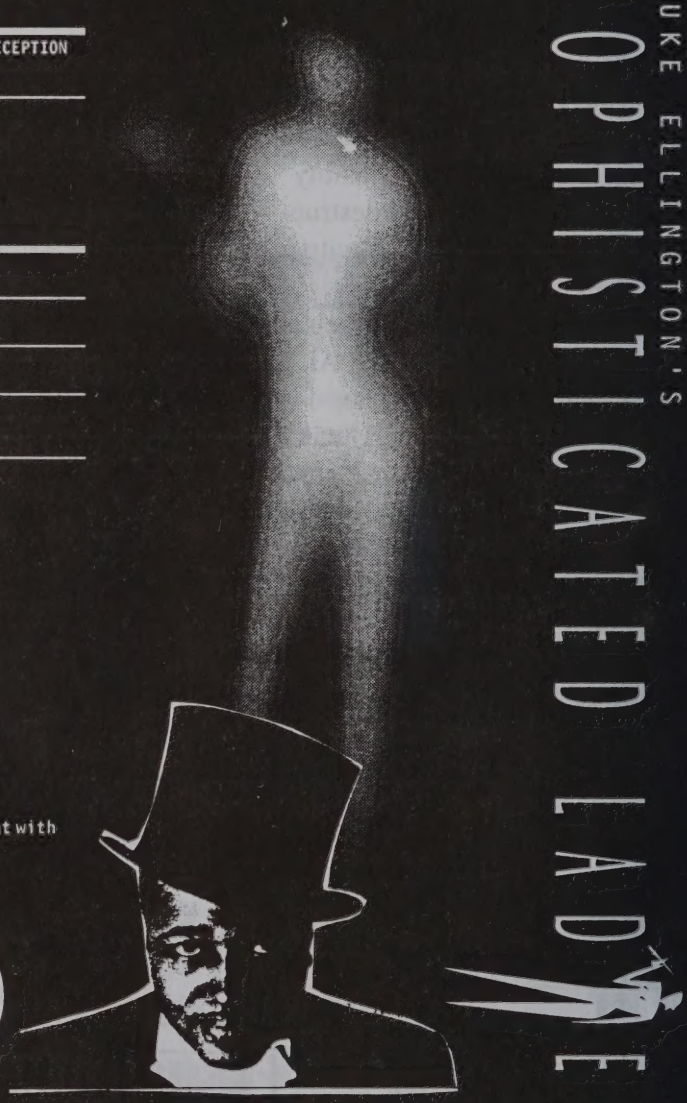

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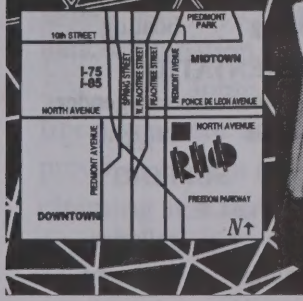

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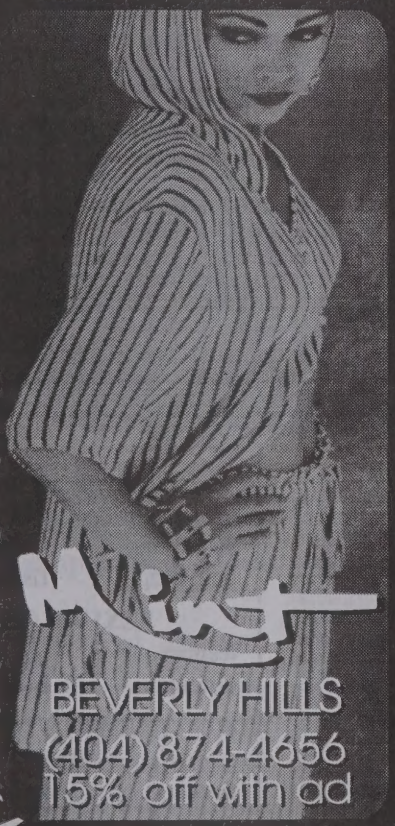

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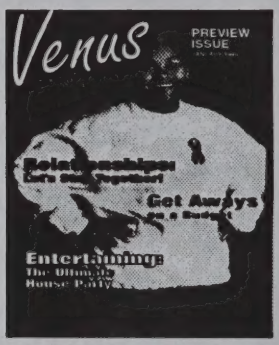


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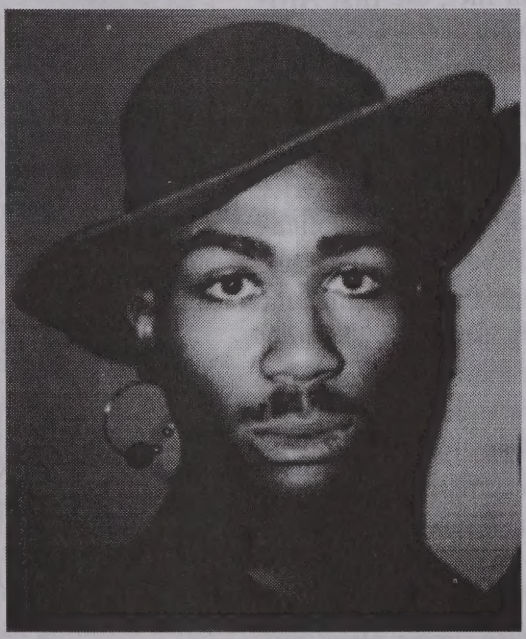
# TRE JOHNSON: A GENTLE AND FIERCELY DETERMINED HERO

*by Shirlene Holmes*

There are a number of ways to describe Leigh Tre Johnson. One could begin with his beautiful catlike eyes or his contagious smile or that delicious southern twist of his dialect, which puts you in the mind of a large plate of macaroni and cheese, collard greens, cord bread, fried chicken and candied yams. One could even begin by telling you about his great talents: his soul stirring singing, his frank honest writing on the black gay experience or his activist's roar. But it seems most appropriate to describe this kind gentle hero as a great spirit with abundant dermination.



Tre Johnson is one of Atlanta's finest southern belles, and is especially proud of it. He thinks nothing of proclaiming his black southern heritage. "Atlanta is black and white, no in betweens," he says. Johnson is not ashamed of the stereotypes folks conjure up when they think southern, black and gay; he is no stereotype. This gentle man feels that the south is his true motherland. It has been the place where he was planted and broke through the soil.

Tre was raised in Georgia, just like the peaches and okra. Fortunately, he has always had a family that supported and loved him. He is the youngest and only son of a blues singing father and devoutly pious Jehovah's Witness mother. Tre says his earliest memories are of hearing music and singing with his dad. He credits his mother with being his anchor and cherishes her compassion and support all through out his life.

Though sheltered by the love of

family, Tre certainly bore the cross growing up in the deep south. He testifies this way: "being a sissy and a lighted skinned black is heavy, but having AIDS is the cherry on top."

Tre Johnson has battled AIDS since 1990, when he was diagnosed at 19 years old. Now at 24, five years later, he has made peace with the disease that has so ravaged his body and changed his life. He shares with confidence, "AIDS came to look for heroes". And Tre is indeed a hero, having endured sickness and having worked hard to see to it that the plights of people living with AIDS as well as black gays and lesbians are heard. He prides himself in having been a spokesperson for Outreach Inc., the first African American AIDS organization founded in the city of Atlanta. He also has been courageous as a writer and performing artist. For awhile now he has been asserting his views as an author. His writings have appeared in such publications as "The Road Before Us / 100 black gay poets" (Galliens Press, 1990) and "Bound by Diversity", an Page 2 anthology of voices from the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered communities (Sebastian Press, 1994).

As a youth, Tre confesses he searched for heroes. He found most of them to be female: the black women in his life as well as those in the history books. He longed to see strong, black gay men to emulate, but there were none. Now he is the one displaying the valor as he fights back against chronic illness and lifts his voice loudly against oppression.

Tre talks freely about AIDS, unflinching, so well aware of the death surrounding him. He is both a three time survivor of pneumonia, as well as, according to Tre, a survivor of the machinations of the medical practitioners. Having AIDS has truly changed Tre's life. He says candidly, "AIDS is a mind disease. You've got to think and make decisions." He is quick to share his impression of his health care treatment:

"Medicine is just like witchcraft —— a practice." He adds, "blacks are not studied nor respected; we have second class status in AIDS care and research. AIDS is a money making thing, the latest craze. We are going to have to start healing ourselves, like we always have had to do."

Johnson believes in the inner power and strength of blacks to overcome. Johnson is not scared of death. He has lost over 200 friends and comrades to AIDS, the closest being his mentor, publisher, poet, performer and activist, Assotto Saint, who passed away in July of 1994.

Johnson credits his openness about AIDS and his sexuality with the fact that he is not ashamed. He adamantly believes that shame keeps black gays vulnerable. "AIDS is a time bomb ticking in our community," Johnson says. He feels the disease is fueled by ignorance, confusion, misinformation and lies. "Our silence is killing us," Johnson says of the black gay community. He believes AIDS has created an urgency now despite the fact that black gays still believe it will not happen to them. Until we conquer that silence, as a black lesbian and gay community, we will be behind. He strongly contends that we must liberate ourselves, have a Harriet Tubman attitude about black lesbian and gay freedom. We must break down stereotypes. It is Tre's

hope that one day, when black lesbians and gays look in the mirror or in each other's eyes, they will no longer be scared of their own reflection. They will not be ashamed to claim who they are.

At his young age, Tre is content, feeling he has done what he has desired with his life. He has no regrets and is very proud of what he has become. Smiling he says he does not want for anything and spends his time doing as he pleases, which for him is truly the meaning of living. In his opinion, most people are not really living. They are merely surviving, caught up in the rat race of working and trying to make ends meet.

Tre celebrates his life and manhood, affirming he never wanted to be a stereotypical gay black man. He takes great pride in his manhood, and feels blessed to possess the heart of a woman, which for him is a special sensitivity to others and the world. Frankly, he abhors the negative image most hold of gay black men and has always strived to set a positive example.

Tre Johnson has numerous accomplishments. He is a proud graduate of Northside School of the Arts. He credits his training at his alma mater in singing, performing and dance as being a factor of his survival. Tre came of age at Northside, finding other black gays to identify with, and also finding his voice as an artist. Tre's poetry and prose have appeared in "Amethyst", "Southern Voice", "The James White Review" and "Eyeball". He has appeared on local and national stages, as well as in theatre abroad: London, France and Brussels. Mostrecently he appeared in several local productions, among them are "Legends Past and Present", "Souls On Fire" and "Warren".

According to Tre, he writes and performs to break the silence. "We must speak now or forever be silenced," he says.

---

Johnson is very afraid for the black gay literary community because most of its pioneers are dead, dying or presently disabled and, thus, unable to take the reins. He feels there is a need for leadership. Leaders must emerge that are not afraid nor ashamed. They must be fair, outspoken and tough.

---

Tre is pleased that Venus magazine now exists, feeling it is a vehicle to educate our community. He admonishes, "we need our own. We cannot expect the white lesbian and gay community to liberate us."

Tre says with an assured calm that he knows his ultimate silence is coming. He has no regrets and is willing to pay the price. Tre says, "I'm paying for speaking up with my heels up." He continues with the utmost frankness, "I won't live to see the cure." He says people with AIDS should be treated as royalty and accorded dignity and respect. And even further, they should be made comfortable in their last days. Tre says it took him a many years to fight, but he will no longer be terrorized because of his race, sexuality or disease. He says with no apologies, "I'm wearing all of my titles: PWA, gay, black, southern and man".

Certainly, this singer, writer, performer and activist proves that gentleness is not weakness. We celebrate Leigh Tre Johnson, a true hero.

# EDUCATION

## BROTHERS BACK 2 BACK

Brothers Back 2 back, Inc. is an Atlanta based network, supporting the ever-present needs of the HIV-positive African-American male. Brother Back 2 Back was established in February 1993, after seeing a vast increase of African-American males testing positive for HIV disease and needing support.

Our mission is to provide practical, emotional and brotherly support primarily for African American males that are infected with or affected by HIV and AIDS. Brothers Back 2 Back, Inc. provides a safe and comfortable environment for men that are living with HIV and AIDS to come and explore their feelings and to develop life maintenance plans. Through support, members are encouraged to lead healthy and active lives, knowing they are not alone and knowing they are supported and loved.

In the years to come, Brothers Back 2 Back, Inc. hopes to extend its arms of support and education beyond Atlanta and into other cities that might need our services. Regardless of age, sexual preference or risk factor, Brothers Back 2 Back, Inc. is open and we always welcome new members to come and experience the bond of love that exists among us.

At present, we are growing rapidly and instituting many programs for newly infected and affected members. We are attempting to become a full service organization to fulfill all the needs of our members.

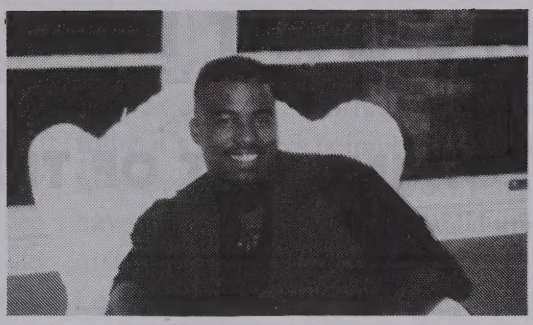
In Atlanta, there are many African-American males infected and affected; some in denial and some who are not. Brothers Back 2 Back, Inc. is attempting to reach these brothers and tell them that HIV/AIDS does not have to mean a death sentence. It simply means that you must restructure your life. At the same time we offer support, a forum for you to speak out, resources and education for you to tap and take advantage of.

This disease knows no boundaries. It crosses all economic and social lines. No one should have to deal with AIDS alone. If you feel we can help, call us. You can reach us at (404) 593-5805. We meet each Monday evening at 6 p.m. at Our Cousin's House, 1023 Dill Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30310.

Brothers Back 2 Back, Inc. is not trying to be all things to all people, but we do know about support and how it is desperately needed in our community.

## PROFILE OF A MAN

Name:
**Craig Craft**
Age:
**24**
Career:
**Massage Therapist**
Latest Book:
**Wouldn't Take Nothing for my Journey Now - Mayou Angelou**
Status:
**Single Parent**
Hometown:
**Dallas, texas**



Craig enjoys horseback riding, biking, canoeing, helping others, and a activities with his son. "When one door of happiness closes, another opens, but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one that has opened for us. Stop. Be still. Pay attention. While we're trying to figure it out, He has already worked it out!"


# AFRICAN AMERICAN OUTREACH

OUR GOAL IS TO PROVIDE HIV/AIDS AWARENESS AND EDUCATION TO ALL AFRICAN AMERICANS AND FOSTER MORE LOVE AND UNDERSTANDING FOR THOSE INFECTED AND AFFECTED!

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# RELATIONSHIPS

## COMING OUT OF THE SECOND CLOSET

By Ulester V. Douglas

As John was telling about the emotional and physical abuse James inflicted in him, one is reminded of a scene from James Earl Hardy's B-Boy Blues. In this scene, Raheim punched Mitchell in the face, sending him soaring over the coffee table. After Mitchell regained consciousness, he reflected on what had just happened:

*"I've seen many an episode of Donahue with battered women and I always believed they were stupid: how, just how could they get themselves into such a situation? They had to see some sign before they got involved with him, before they got married. One day they wake up and he just comes out swinging? But I could identify with the helplessness and broken trust, now that I was in their position— or was I? Does it take just one hit? I was trying to make sense of it all and found myself doing exactly the same thing that many of those women did: rationalizing, in a way excusing the man's behavior... Raheim was under a lot of stress. He witnessed the death of his best friend. I had to share some of the blame; I provoked him. If I had just kept my mouth shut...I should have known he would react like that..."*

Although this is fiction, Mitchell's rationalization and self-blame lasted only a few minutes. Mitchell was able to recognize in a relatively short time that he was not to blame for Raheim's violent behavior, that he did not provoke him and that nothing justified being abused. Also, Mitchell had supportive friends who affirmed that Raheim was responsible for his own actions regardless of the circumstances.

This is not the case for John and thousands of other gay men who are being battered by their partners. Most victims believe that they are to blame for their partner's abusive actions; that they provoked him and deserve to be abused. This is because the batterer is extremely skilled at making the victim feel that way.

One of his manipulative tactics is to isolate the victim from friends and family.

---

The batterer convinces the victim that friends and family are no good and are a threat to their relationship. In doing this, the batterer ensures that there is hardly anyone the victim can trust and talk to about what's going on.

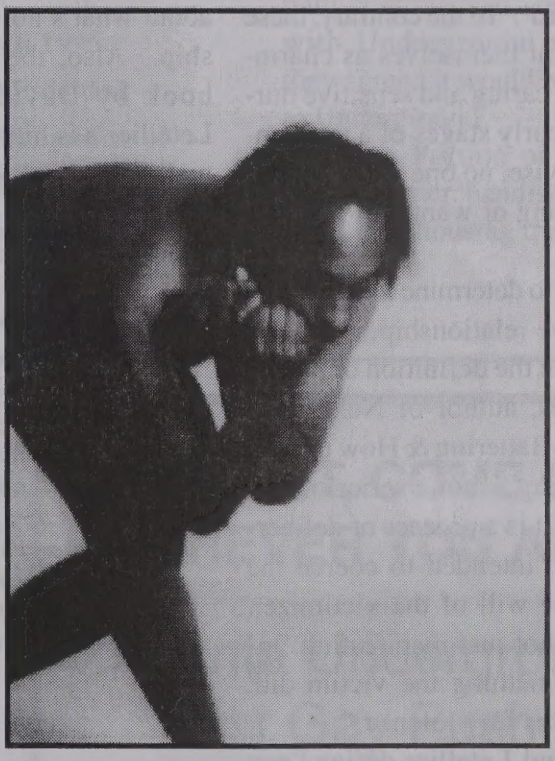
---

There is no one to do a reality check; no one to say that it is wrong; that the name calling, hitting, and threatening are all so

wrong; no one to say that forcing the victim to have sex because of how much he loves the batterer is really about the batterer's need for power and control.

Isolation contributes to a very low disclosure rate. Most gay men who are abuse by their partner or ex-partner do not disclose that they are being abused. They calculate that it is safer to stay in this 'second closet' and that the incentives for coming out are few to none.

There is hardly anything in the literature or media that validates the existence of gay male victims. Like Mitchell, when they look at the talk shows, they only see and hear about 'stupid women' who stay in these relationships; 'stupid women' who should have seen it coming. Where are the men? Where are the men who have to constantly walk on eggshells and do not feel comfortable in their own home? Where are the men who are forced to have unprotected sex with partners who sleep around? Where are the men who live in fear that the next time they may be dead?



Sadly, the message sent is that men are not victims, only perpetrators- Certainly not black men. This myth is perpetuated in the gay community. We do not hold batterers accountable for their actions. We buy into the myths that men should be able to defend themselves; that it's just a lovers' quarrel; that it's just a fight; it's just boys being boys. We look for every possible excuse to deny that we have a serious problem in our community, but, David Island and Patrick Letellier, authors of Men Who Beat the Men Who Love Them, estimate that their are 500,000 victims of gay battering each year, with a number of these resulting in death.

In addition to denying and minimizing the severity of this problem, we say that it is not in our best interest to air our dirty laundry to a homophobic, racist and sexist community. This is especially true if dealing with law enforcement agencies. There is little or nothing in place that encourages a black gay man to report to the police that he is being battered by his partner. Reporting this could mean having to acknowledge that he is gay. He may not be ready to come out and it may not be safe to do so. Also, he risks being laughed at by the police and told to be a man. It is no secret that the law enforcement community has historically been cruel to

black men. Even when we are victims of a crime, we are treated as the perpetrators. Where is a black male victim of battering to go for safety?

Even as we decide whether or not to involve the police, we struggle with recognizing whether or not we are in an abusive relationship. It is difficult for us to accept that the man we fell in love with is now abusing us. It is important to understand that batterers do not walk around with a sign on their forehead that reads 'batterer on board'. To the contrary, these men may present themselves as charming, wonderful, caring and sensitive during dating and early stages of a relationship. And likewise, no one enters a relationship expecting or wanting to be battered.

In order to determine whether you are in an abusive relationship, it is helpful to understand the definition of battering. Ann Jones, author of Next Time She'll Be Dead-Battering & How to Stop It, says, "battering is not a series of isolated blowups. It is a process of deliberate intimidation intended to coerce the victim to do the will of the victimizer. The batterer is not just manifesting 'insecurity' by something the victim did. These are excuses for violence."

Island and Letellier define "gay men's domestic violence" as any unwanted physical, psychological abuse, or material/property destruction inflicted by one man on another. Examples of physical violence include: forced anal, oral, or genital contact; being choked, punched, kicked, pushed, shoved, slapped, grabbed, etc.; being forced to have sex without a condom. Examples of psychological/emotional violence include: being ignored, neglected, isolated, lied to, ridiculed; threatening to kill the victim, self or other; threatening to leave the relationship; threatening to reveal his sexual orientation. Examples of material or property destruction include: destroying clothes, damaging vehicles, breaking furniture, windows and other valuables.

If you have begun to question whether you are in an abusive relationship, the odds are good that you are. Take the risk and talk to someone you trust about what's going on in your relationship. Also, the previously mentioned book by David Island and Patrick Letellier's is highly recommended. Actually, this book is an excellent resource for anyone who wishes to learn more about gay battering.

---

*If you or someone you know is being abused, there is a support group, call (404) 325-2484 for more information. Dr. Gus Kaufman and Ulester Douglas are currently forming a class in the Atlanta area for gay/bisexual men who use physical and/or psychological abuse, or property destruction against another man, please call (404) 320-0090 for more information.*

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PROFILE OF A BUSINESS

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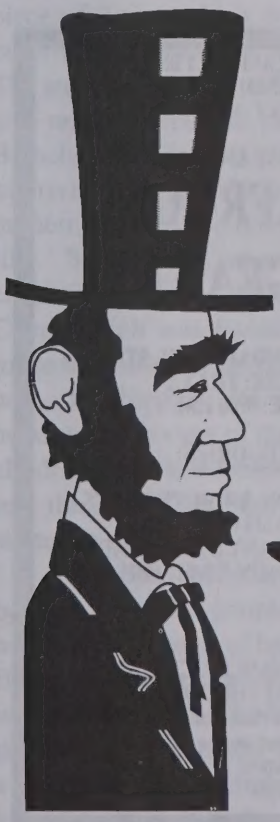

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## PROFILE OF A QUEEN

Name:
**Ysatis Givenchy**
Status:
**"Involved"**
Age:
**23**
Last Book Read:
**Book of Angels**
Hometown:
**San Juan, Puerto Rico**
Former Titles:
**Miss World Queen**

Ysatis is from the U.S. Virgin Islands. Some of her favorite pastimes include shopping, dancing, listening to good music and watching her favorite horror movies.


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PROUDLY PRESENTS

THE 1ST ANNUAL
**Miss AFROGAL PAGEANT**

**WHEN: SUNDAY APRIL 9TH**
**WHERE: TRAXX**
**TIME: 9:00 P.M.**

**CATEGORIES:**

PRESENTATION: **TRIBUTE TO 70'S**
(EMPHASIS ON AFRO)
EVENING WEAR: (ANY EVENING ATTIRE)
TALENT: 7 MIN. TIME LIMIT

$5.00 ADVANCE TICKETS
$7.00 AT THE DOOR
For more Information Please Contact any AFROGAL Board Member
***Niesha Dupree (404) 522-4467
***Bruce Wright (404) 984-2319

# REVIEWS

## BOOKS

### Blanche Among the Talented Tenth

*Author: Barbara Neely*
*by B.J. Jackson*

Are you looking for a book that's easy reading, full of wit and humor, intriguing suspenseful, has a mystery to be solved with an extraordinary African American woman as the central character? You say yes! yes! yes! I say pick up BLANCHE AMONG THE TALENTED TENTH.

Blanche White, a dark skinned domestic worker is the central character in this piece of fiction which deals with class and color divisions among African Americans. The story takes place in Maine, at an exclusive resort for Blacks called Amber Cove. Blanche has managed to enroll her children in private school and also notices a change in their attitudes she doesn't like. She accepts an invitation from her children's wealthy friends to visit Amber Cove, which was founded by a man who made his money from skin lightening products. In accepting the invitation, Blanche hopes to get a view of the interaction of her children with their wealthy friends and correct the snotty attitudes her children have started to develop.

Once Blanche arrives the adventure begins. She meets people who look down at her simply because of her dark complexion. Being the feisty, grounded, self-loving woman she is, Blanche has no problem putting them in their place. Blanche also meets a 70 plus year old feminist diva who is a well known author. This diva is the widow of a white man who admires Blanche's wit and spunk. The famous feminist enlist Blanche's help in finding out if the suicide of her godson and fatal accident of the most hated resident of the resort are connected. Blanche is also pursued romantically by a very handsome and suave gentleman. However during the course of her investigation, Blanche discovers the dirty secrets of all the residents of amber Cove including her diva friend and her romantic pursuer.

This is a well written book with an intriguing storyline. It is full of wit and humor and sings the praises of the working class African American woman. Barbara Neely has created a character who is a forty year old domestic worker who has it all together. She introduces us to a feisty black woman with attitude, wit, survival skills and intelligence. This is a book you will not want to put down, a character you will want to meet again and an author you will want to read again, and again and again.

*"The Talented Tenth of the Negro race must be made leaders of thought and missionaries of culture among their people....The Negro race, like all other races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men."*

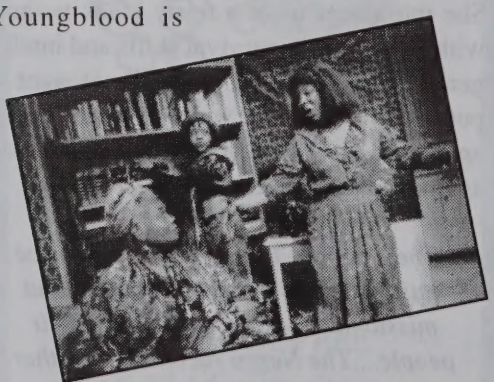
*-W.E.B.Du Bois, "The Talented Tenth"*

# ENTERTAINMENT

## PLAYS For Your "Must See" List!

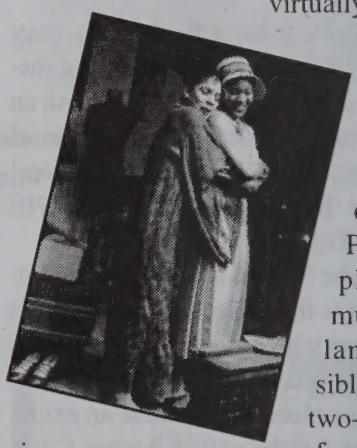
Welcome to Ancestors Books and Breakfast where the menu is... fantastic! Taste our literary and backbone soup. Sip our ink tea and wisdom wine. Sprinkle in some magic and romance, add a dash of comedy, and stir in mystery. Then meet the three generations of African American women who serve up this delicious food for the body and soul in Horizon Theatre Company's Southeastern Premiere of Shay Youngblood's **TALKING BONES**, a 1993 winner of the Lorraine Hansberry Award for Best new Play by an African American writer.

Talking Bones arose from Georgia-born playwright Shay Youngblood's own family experience: "While growing up," she says, "I lived in a house where the elders heard voices. It was understood that these voices were the voices of the ancestors. All of my work tends to be about honoring the ancestors; honoring and listening closely to the inner voice and intuition." In addition to Talking Bones, Shay Youngblood is



the author of Horizon's hit world premiere Shakin' the Mess Outta Misery (both published by Dramatic Publishing Company). It runs from now until April 23rd. For tickets call (404) 584-7450.

According to the Alliance Theater's Kenny Leon, **BLUES FOR AN ALABAMA SKY** will now run through May 14. Leon explains, "For months, BLUES FOR AN ALABAMA SKY has been virtually sold out to our Alliance subscribers and I want to share the excitement of Pearl's new play with as much of Atlanta as possible. With this two-week extension, more of you can hear Pearl's amazing words and witness the unbelievable talents of Phylicia Rashad, Bill Nunn, Gsary Yates, Deidrie Henry and Mark Young."



Cleage's BLUES FOR AN ALABAMA SKY is set amidst Harlem 1930 when "The creative euphoria of the Harlem Renaissance has given way to the harsher realities of the great Depression."

Best known for her work on "The Cosby Show", Phylicia Rashad is a consummate actress and singer with such Broadway credits as JELLY'S LAST JAM, INTO THE WOODS, DREAMGIRLS, THE WIZ, and AIN'T SUPPOSED TO DIE A NATURAL DEATH.

Tickets to BLUES FOR AN ALABAMA SKY are $20.00 and $26.00 and may be purchased at the Woodruff Arts Center Box Office, or by calling 404-733-5000.

# ENTERTAINMENT

## JOMANDI'S "Sophisticated Ladies"

Jomandi presents it's high energy production of the Broadway hit musical, "Sophisticated Ladies," featuring the seasoned talents of Chandra Currelley, Sheila Stroud and members of Mistyque as well as newer talents like J. Karen Thomas.

"Sixty people auditioned for this show. I wish I could have hired forty, but we can only have twelve or fourteen," exclaimed director Tom Jones, when asked how auditions went for the upcoming production. "It's the most awesome audition I've ever seen. Each performer was as good as or better than the other. It was a hard call."

The result is a high-powered combination of singers and dancers that signals a resulting level of performances to the music of jazz master Duke Ellington that will be equal to those of the Broadway production. "We never lack for talent, with our productions," continue Jones, "it's just that we don't have the big bucks for the big staging to go along with the 'big' talent.

"It Don't mean a thing," "I got it bad and that ain't good," "take the A train," "solitude," and of course "sophisticated Lady," are but a sampling of the hits in this sophisticated Broadway hit. With the music of Ellington as the driving force, "Sophisticated Ladies" explores Duke's rise from the cotton club in Harlem to African-American classical music royalty. Last season Jomandi gave Atlanta the definitive "Dreamgirls". Join Jomandi this spring when we make the "sophisticated Ladies" a classic all over again.

Advance tickets available at Ticketmaster: 817-8700. For groups, discounts and information, call 876-6346. Runs April 7-May 7.

Hold on to your tickets! Join **Venus Magazine** Memorial Day Weekend for a salute tot the Black Arts community. Sunday, May 28, 1995 at Odella's. Watch for more info!

# IS IT EASIER FOR WOMEN TO HIDE?

*By Dream*

Consider this: one woman gets dressed to go out into the world. She puts on her stockings, her business dress, the appropriate amount of makeup, in the appropriate colors. She combs her hair back into a suitable style for corporate America. She chooses her one inch heels in black to match her purse. Another woman gets dressed to go out into the very same world. She chooses slacks instead of a dress. She forgoes the wearing of makeup. She wears a fashionable blazer to match her slacks. Her hair is clipped into a short natural. She prefers stylish loafers instead of heels. Given the picture of two women, which would you more likely identify as the lesbian? Given that picture, a lesbian who wants to hide, which woman would you more likely be?

The ability to hide is tangled in the roles that women assume in everyday society. We are able to hide using words that are taken for granted. The word "girlfriend" is a good example. How many times do you hear a conversation that starts with, "I was talking to my girlfriend the other day...", or, "My girlfriend was at my house last night and..."? In a heterosexual context, such phrases are benign and almost never cause a raised brow. If such a phrase is uttered along with a wink and an elbow in the side, then it shades the meaning. And that shade of meaning is what a lesbian can hide behind.

Is it easier for women to hide? Yes. Women are supposed to be the gentler, the more affectionate sex. Holding a girlfriend's hand is okay, as long as it is done in a way that is accepted

in a social setting. Hugging your girlfriend for giving you flowers is okay. Seriously kissing your woman for giving you flowers is a different story. Throw an arm about a girlfriend's shoulder and that's okay, too. It's an act of camaraderie. Without that wink and nudge, having your arms about your woman is acceptable.

In a heterosexist and patriarchal society, a woman has a certain amount of status if she can attach herself to a man. I doubt if Scarlet O'Hara would be so admired if it weren't for Rhett Butler. Could Snow White be held up as a fine example of womanhood if she hadn't gotten the royal kiss from her prince?

Allowing people to think that there may be a man somewhere in her distant future, allows a woman to hang on to some of the status afforded by maintaining a heterosexual facade. How many times, if you are not willing to tell an outright lie, have you just smiled when your mother asked you pointedly if there is a significant MAN in your life? Telling her the truth would rob her of her dreams for a man in your life. Not telling her helps her hold out hope and keeps you well hidden.

So outward appearance keeps a woman hidden. Maintaining that facade of potential for some man, somewhere helps keep a woman hidden. Acting the way everyone expects her to act, keeps a woman hidden. That's all it takes. Some women find this easy.

She can hide in the image of heels instead of loafers. She can maintain that independence is her goal and not a man. She can hide if she can handle explaining the love of her life as only a satisfying friendship instead of a grand passion. It isn't easy for a woman to hide when she comes to the conclusion that she loses more than she gains by hiding. It isn't easy to hide a happiness that helps to complete your life. It isn't easy to hide when you decide that the privilege given because you connect yourself with a man isn't worth the trouble. It isn't easy to hide when you believe it's okay to be who you are.

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# BLACK GAY PRIDE WEEKEND

## WASHINGTON, D.C.

## '95

**MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND**
**MAY 26 - MAY 29**
**$299 PP/DBL**
**RT AIR FARE HOTEL ACCOMADATION DISCOUNT CAR RENTAL**
**(PASSES TO EVENTS ADDITIONAL)**

## THE 4TH ANNUAL PICNIC AT RED TOP MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND

**$120 PP/DBL**
**HOTEL ACCOMADATION & TAXES AT DAYS INN**

## LOS ANGELES AT THE BEACH '95

**4TH OF JULY WEEKEND**
**JUNE 30TH -JULY 3RD**
**$432 PP/DBL**
**RT AIR FARE HOTEL ACCOMADATION DISCOUNT CAR RENTALS & TRANSFERS**

## HOT 'LANTA BLACK GAY PRIDE '95

**LABOR DAY WEEKEND**
**SEPT. 1ST - SEPT. 4TH**
**TO BE ANNOUNCED**

# TIME TO TRAVEL

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TIME TO TRAVEL / RIO MALL
(*inside Lambda Pharmacy*) 595 Piedmont Rd.
**404-347-9738**

**OR**
TIME

TO TRAVEL / MIDTOWN
736 Ponce de Leon, N.E.
**404-881-9653**

The 411 ON ATLANTA'S BLACK GAY NITE LIFE

# Going Out Tonight?

| BARS | LOCATION | BEST NITE | MIX | MUSIC |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| WAREHOUSE (TRAXX) | 306 Luckie St. (404) 577-9510 | Sat. | Men 80% Women 20% | House |
| WATERWORKS CAFE | 111 Luckie St. (404) 577-7059 | Sun. Fri. | Men 70% Women 30% | R&B House Show |
| PEARL GARDEN | 111 Luckie St. (404) 524-0036 | Thurs. | Men 95% Women 5% | R&B Show |
| THE MARQUETTE LOUNGE | M.L. King Jr. Dr. (404) 525-7677 | Sat. | Men 50% Women 50% Show | Top 40 R&B |
| LORETTA'S | 708 Spring St. (404) 874-8125 | Fri., Sat. | Men 60% Women 40% | House |

## 1995 PRIDE MARKET APPLICATIONS

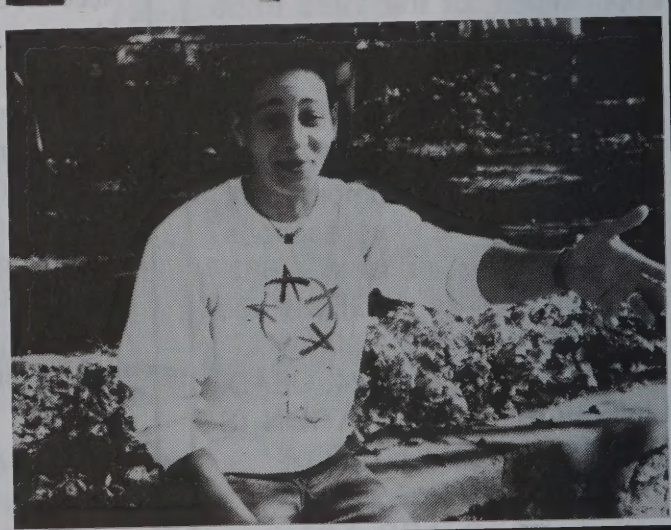
Atlanta Lesbian and Gay Pride Committee (ALGPC) is accepting applications for the 1995 Pride Market form all Artists, Vendors, and Organizations. This year's 25th anniversary edition of The Pride Market will be held on June 24&25, 1995 in Piedmont Park. For information and applications, call the Pride Line at 404-662-4533 or write to ALGPC Pride Market, P.O. BOX 54024, ATLANTA, GA, 30308-0024. DEADLINE FOR REGISTRATION IS MAY 1, 1995.

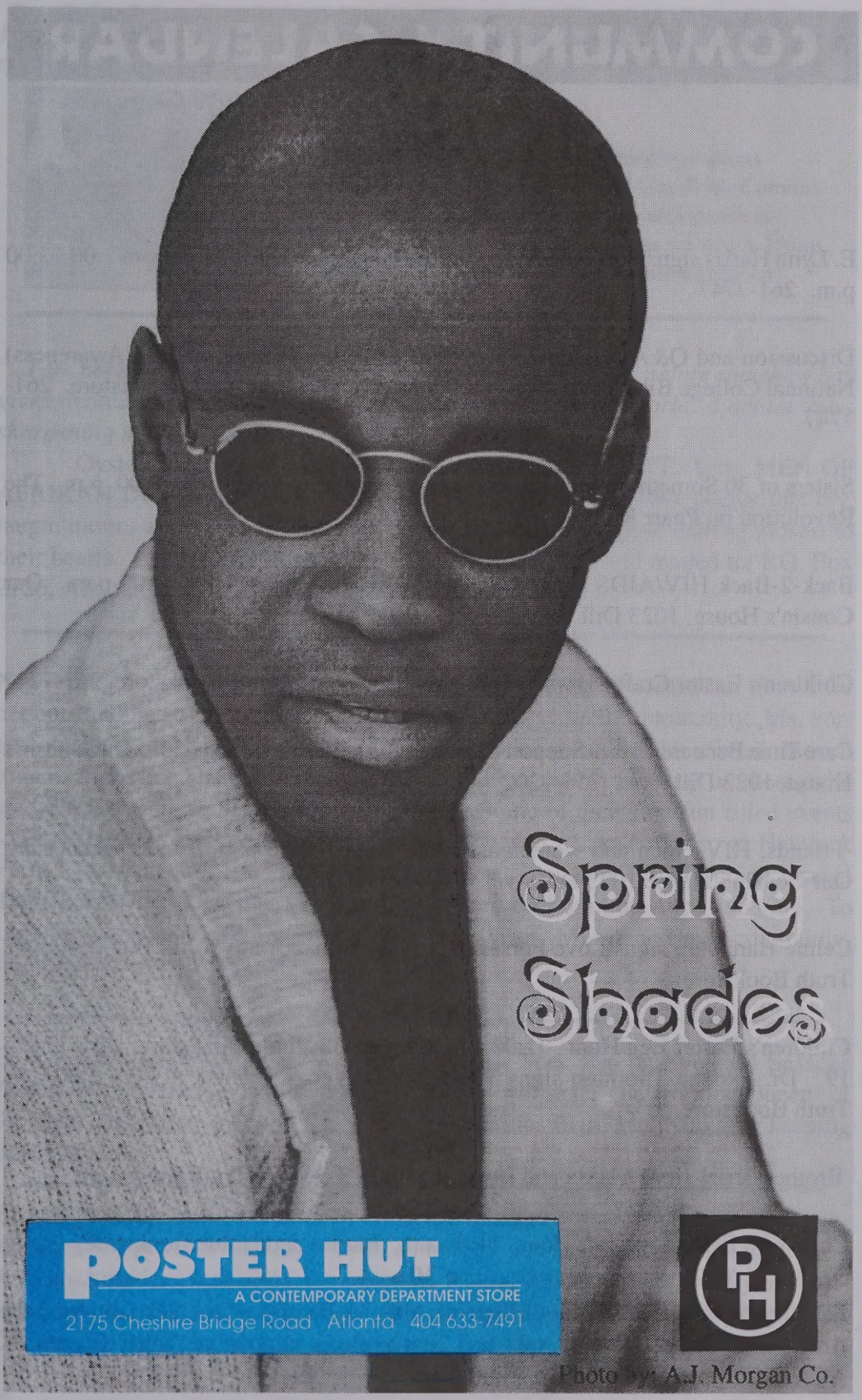

## FULL TIME ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE

Venus Magazine is seeking qualified candidates for the position of Account Executive to sell display advertising. This is an outside full time sales position. Previous sales experience is preferred. There is a monthly mileage allowance and commission program. If you believe that you can sell, then sell yourself to us! Call Venus line at 404-622-8069, (24 Hours), and tell us why you would like to join the southeast's hottest new magazine!

Venus

# OUT & ABOUT

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# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## April

**•1•**

E. Lynn Harris signs Just As I Am at Barnes and Noble Bookstore, from 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. 261-7747

**•3•**

Discussion and Q&A session with cyclists of Pedro Zamora's (AIDS Awareness) National College Bike Tour, 8:oo - 9:00 p.m. at Barnes and Noble Bookstore. 261-7747

**•7•**

Sisters of 30 Something Special sponsors a spirituality workshop. 7:00 p.m., The Revolution on Pharr Rd.

**•10•**

Back-2-Back HIV/AIDS support meeting EACH Monday, 7:00 - 8:00 p.m.. Our Cousin's House, 1023 Dill Avenue.

**•11•**

Children's Easter Crafts Hour. 11:00 a.m. Barnes and Noble Bookstore. 261-7747

**•11•**

Care Time For care Givers Support Meeting. Each Tuesday, &;)) - 9:00. Our Cousin's House, 1023 Dill Ave.. 756-9202

**•12•**

Friends, HIV+ men and women assemble 10:00 - 2:00 p.m. EACH Wednesday. Our Cousin's House.1023 Dill Ave. 404-756-9202

**•14•**

Celine Hardware signs Love Forsaken, a black romance novel. 12:00 - 2:00 p.m. Truth Bookstore.

**•15•**

Children's Easter Egg Hunt. 11:00 a.m. Barnes and Noble Bookstore. 261-7747
19 Dr. Yvonne Thornton signs The Ditch Diggers Daughter. 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. Truth Bookstore

**•21•**

Brother Erriel signs Maasa and Beyond. 1:00 - 3:30 p.m. Truth Bookstore

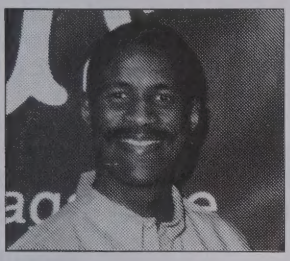
**•25•**

Children's Earth day Craft Hour. 11:00 a.m. Barnes and Noble Bookstore.

**•30•**

Last day to visit the Atlanta College of Art's "A Family affair; Sexuality and the American Family". Photographs and Text explores alternative family life-styles. ACA Gallery, M-S 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

# ANNOUNCEMENTS



Herbert Alexander has been named operations manager for Atlanta Lesbian and Gay Pride Committee. This year, African-American attendance is expected to be at an all time high as we march "from silence to celebration." Congratulations Hubert!

---

*"...I am not of that sobbing school of Negrohood who hold that nature somehow has given them a low down dirty deal. No, I do not weep at the world. I am too busy sharpening my oyster knife."* Zora Neale Hurston

Oyster Knife Publishing presents A CALL FOR POETRY by MEN OF AFRIKAN DESCENT (Latino, Carribean, U.S. Born). We seek poems that cry, laugh, mourn and worship. We seek poems that celebrate those matters closest to their hearts. All submissions should be typed, in English, and mailed to: P.O. Box 2726, Atlanta, Georgia, 30301, by June 15, 1995.

---

New York City's Lois Porter received the Annual 4 Seasons Award last month for her outstanding contributions to the black lesbian / gay social community. Ms. Porter founded Les' Amies 32 years ago. The group is one of the oldest known social organizations for black lesbians. She started with twelve hospital workers, who sold dinners to raise money for their affairs, Some of their first fun filled events took place at an upstate New York Resort, Johnson's Lake and also at Hemlock Farm. The year was 1963 and after all this time, Les' Amies is still going strong! Their next event takes place in Brooklyn's Marc Ballroom on April 29, 1995. To Lois Porter, who is "70-something" this year, Venus Magazine sends congratulations and a hearty "YOU GO GIRL!"

---

Bess Knowings of Simplicity Attraction of New York also received a 4 Seasons Award for outstanding contributions. Bess is known as the "networking Queen" of the black lesbian social community. Congratulations Bess, and thanks for keeping us plugged in!

---

ZAMI, Atlanta's premiere African-American lesbian organization is seeking submissions for possible inclusion in an anthology of coming out stories written by African-American lesbians. We welcome letters, journal entries, poetry and personal essays. Please send submissions to Mary Anne Adams at, P.O. Box 2502, Decatur, Georgia, 30331.

# NATIONAL EVENTS

## APRIL

**1**

**D.C.**
Phatt Baby Productions "Spring Has Sprung" Fashion Show & Dance. Days Inn, 2700 New York Ave., N.E. 10 - 3 a.m.. Entertainment, buffet, cash bar, dancing. $12. / $15.. Woo-Woo (202) 554-0456

**2**

**D.C.**
Mawava Social Club's Annual "April Fool Madness". Bachelor's Mill, 1104 8th St., S.E. 4 p.m. - 2 a.m. Entertainment, buffet, cash bar, dancing. $10. - $12.

**8**

**New York**
Annual Black and Gold Affair, by Simplicity Attractions of New York. Marc Ballroom. 27 Union Sq., West, NYC. Entertainment, open bar, buffet, after 5 wear. $30. Bess Knowings (718) 992-9073

**9**

**D.C.**
Lady B. Productions' Annual Show. Bachelor's Mill, 1104 8th St., S.E. 6 p.m. - 2 a.m. Entertainment, dancing, cash bar. $5. Woo-Woo (202) 554-0456

**Atlanta**
African-American Family Reunion of Gays and Lesbians (AFROGAL) presents the first annual AFROGAL Pageant. Tribute to the 70's. Doors open at 9 p.m. $5. adv. / $7. door. Contact Niesha Dupree (404) 522-4467

**14**

**New York**
"The Sisters" ski weekend, Mount Laurel Resort. Whitewater, Pa. (Poconos). For more info call Dawn Soto. (718) 5198593, or Barbara Rooks (718) 429-6726

**15**

**Atlanta**
Our Cousin's House Annual Easter Basket Raffle. Midnite, Loretta's, 3rd & Spring St. (404) 874-8125

**16**

**D.C.**
An Easter Sunday Extravaganza with Krystal Snow. Brass Rail, 476 K St., N.W. 8 p.m. - 2 a.m. Entertainment, dancing, buffet, cash bar. $6. Woo-Woo (202) 554-0456

**Atlanta**
Sisters of 30-Something Special presents a "post" Freaknic Dance at Club Oxygen. 4 - 10 p.m. (404) 997-6240

**27**

**Atlanta**
Women's Day Camp Weekend. April 27 - 29, 1995, at The River's Edge. Private membership only campground. (706) 213-8081

**28**

**Atlanta**
Sisters of Thirty-Something Special present their "Single to Mingle" gathering. Club Oxygen. 4 - 10 p.m. (404) 997-6240

**New York**
Elaine and Company presents "An Oldies but Goodies Party!" Contact Elaine at (212) 242-8610, or Barbara (212) 741-3467. $20. M.L.K. Labor Center, 310 West 43 St., (off 8th Ave.) NYC

**29**

**New York**
Les' Amies, one of New York's oldest black lesbian social groups, will present its annual affair. 10 - 3 a.m. at the Marc Ballroom. Entertainment, dancing, cash bar. Contact Bess Knowings at (718) 992-9073.

## MAY

**6**

**Baltimore**
Simplicity Attraction's Annual Help Them Buffet. Lithuanian Hall, 851 Hollins St., 5 p.m. - 12 a.m. Entertainment, dancing, BYOL, munchies, free set-ups. Attire - casual. Tickets $15. Bobbi Moore (301) 596-6167

**17**

**Atlanta**
"I Remember Venus" ...friends of Venus Landin meet at Kalo's Coffee House, 1248 Clairmont Rd., Decatur to celebrate her 34th birthday. Open Mic, readings and songs. Come share your memories. (404) 325-3733. No Cover, any donations accepted will benefit the Lamda Community Center.

**20**

**Baltimore**
Cricket and Beverly's White Affair. Dundalk Union Hall. 9 p.m. - 2 a.m. Dancing, buffet, free beer & wine, BYOL. Tickets $20. Bobbi Moore (301) 596-6167

**MEMORIAL DAY 26 WEEKEND !!**

**D.C.**
Woo-Babi & Carter Associates' Weekend Wet Party. Days Inn, 2700 N.Y. Ave., N.E. 10 p.m. - 3 a.m., bikini fashion show, mini-show, exotic dancers, cash bar, lavish buffet, dancing. $12. adv., $15. door.

**27**

**Los Angeles**
At the Beach... ATB presents its National Kickoff Celebration! Watch for details! (213) 969-1619
**Atlanta**
Sisters of 30-Something Special presents Comfort Zone Productions, a NYC theater troupe, in "The Personals". Two shows; 4 p.m. matinee, 8 p.m. evening. West End Performing Arts Center. $12. adv. / $15. door. Call (404) 804-8381
Atlanta
Hospitality Atlanta presents its annual Memorial day Party. Doors open at 10 p.m. (404) 627-1630

**28**

**Atlanta**
Hospitality Atlanta returns to Red Top Mountain for the 4th annual Memorial Day Picnic Celebration on beautiful Lake Alatoona; one hour north of the city. 11 a.m. til dusk! Music, dancing, fun and frolic. Vendors call (404) 627-1630

---

**Atlanta**
**Venus Magazine** presents the 1st Annual **Memorial Day Salute to the Black Arts Community.** Odella's 1231 W. Peachtree St. Doors open at 9 p.m. Festive attire. Meet and greet some of our nation's finest! Music, dancing, buffet, live show case, jazz saxophonist, obu, on the patio. $10. The following tickets / stubs / 2-for-1! Jelly's Last Jam, Sophisticated Ladies, The Personals, The Dance Theater of Harlem, Talking Bones, Mississippi Delta, Blues for an Alabama Sky, Raisin,A Lady and A Woman, Sensuality, and Servant of the People.

---

**D.C.**
Marcking Productions Black Gay Pride Celebration. Bachelor's Mill, 1104 8th St., S.E. 9 p.m. - 3 a.m. Dancing, entertainment, cash bar, $5.
**Atlanta**
WOMANWRITES '95: 17th annual conference for lesbian writers. May 28 - June 4th. One hour south of the city. Workshops, readings, meals, dormitory sleeping, lake. $70. - $100. Send SASE by May 15th! Silver Circle, Rt. 5, Box 100, Holly Springs, MS 38635 or contact Maree at (502) 966-2420

## JUNE

**8**

**New York**
Simplicity Attractions of N.Y. presents WEEKEND IN PROVINCETOWN, MASS., June 8-11, Transportation, room, dinner, breakfast, pool party, swim suit contest! For reservations contact Bess Knowings. (718) 992-9073, or Annette Armstrong (212) 283-1701
**Atlanta**
"AFROGAL" present the 1st Annual African-American FAMILY REUNION of gays and lesbians. Clarion Hotel, June 8 - 11. Bonding, education, entertainment. Contact: Niesha Dupree (404) 522-4467, Bruce Wright (404) 984-2319, Keanne Fox (404) 973-1270

# ORGANIZATIONS

*Send us your info! Additions, deletions, corrections, or expansions may be faxed to: (404) 622-8089 or mail to Venus Magazine, P.O. Box 89238, Atlanta, Georgia 30312*

**Abundant Grace Community Church,** 743 Virginia Ave., Sunday worship- 7:30 PM, (404) 815-0036
**African Ancestral Lesbians United for Societal Change** (Formerly Salsa Soul), (212) 620-7310, Candice
**African American Lesbian Gay Alliance (AALGA)**, (404) 908-7371
**Aids Education Services for Minorities (AESM)** P.O. Box 87277, Atlanta, GA, 30337., (404) 753-2900, (404) 743-7733
**AIDS Response Knoxville**, Suite 411,109 Northshore Dr., Knoxville, TN 37919, (615) 450-2437
**Asians and Friends/Atl.**, P.O. Box 13072, Atlanta, GA, 30324, (404) 876-9800 fax: (404) 876-0090
**Black Lesbian Gay Pride Inc., (BLGP Inc.)**, P.O. Box 7184, Washington D.C. 20024
**Black Gay & Lesbian Leadership Forum**, 1219 S. La Brea Ave., Los Angeles, Ca. 90019, (213) 964-7820 fax: (213) 964-7830
**Black & White Men Together**, P.O. Box 1334, Atlanta, Ga. 30301-1334, (404) 892-BWMT
**Black Lesbians With Children**, (404) 498-3815
**Boyz of Distinction**, P.O. Box 78091, Atlanta, Ga. 30532
**Brothers Back-2-Back, Inc.,** An African-American HIV/AIDS Organization. P.O. Box 11366, Atlanta, Georgia 30310, Voice: (404) 593-5805
**Gay Black Female, G.B.F.**, 6312 Hollywood Blvd., Suite 114, Hollywood, California 90028 (310) 288-6315
**The Gay and Lesbian Center**, 208 W. 13th St., N.Y., N.Y. 10011.
**Gay/Lesbian Latino/a Comm. Organization. Out Reach Inc.**, (404) 346-3922, 1(800) 441-2437
**Home Free Ministry**, P.O. Box 688, Atlanta, Ga. 30301, (404) 818-2033
**Hospitality Atlanta**, (404) 627-1630
**Lambada Car Club/Dogwood Region**, (404) 901-9447
P.O. Box 11705, Atlanta, Ga. 30355
**Las Buenas Amigas**, (210) 868-7816, Carmen, The Gay and Lesbian Center, 208 W. 13th. St. N.Y., N.Y.10011
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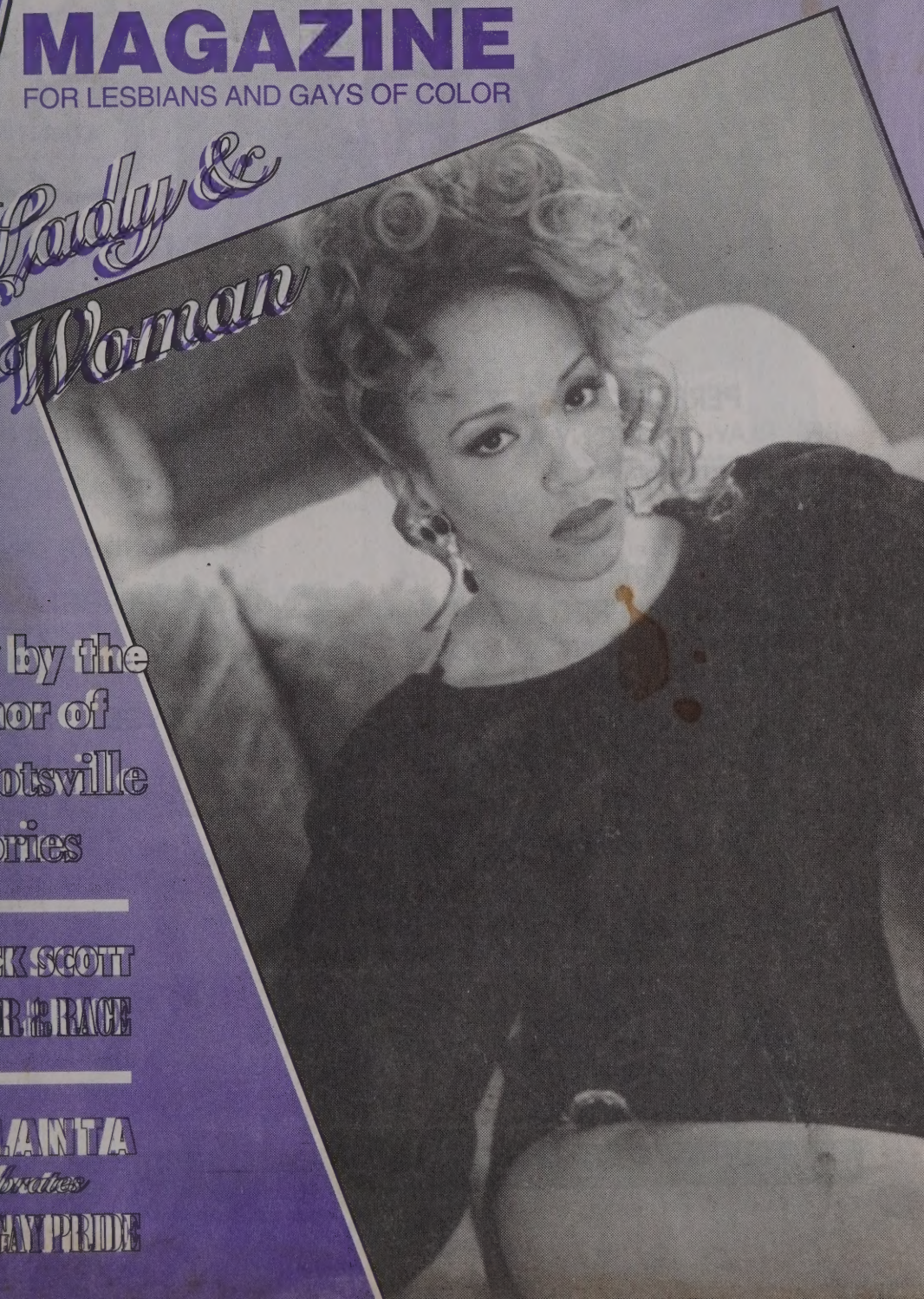

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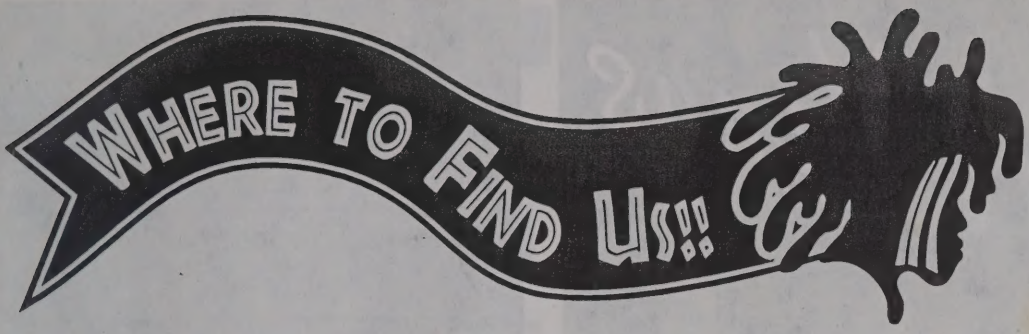


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August/September 1995
Vol 1., No. 8

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ADVERTISING SALES
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is published monthly by
Cothran Publications, Inc.
404/622-8069 • FAX: 404/622-8089
P.O. Box 89238, Atlanta, GA 30312

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# CONTENTS

## FEATURES


**An Interview with Dr. Shirlene Holmes** 11

**RACISIM UNDER THE RAINBOW** 15

**BLACK GAY PRIDE ATLANTA 1995** 32

**INTERVIEW WITH DARIECK SCOTT** 37

**GAY/LESBIAN BUSINESS EXPO** 43

**SOUTHERN TOWN HALL MEETING** 53


## DEPARTMENTS


**RELATIONSHIPS**
Stroking the Flames 29

**SPIRITUALITY**
MCC Convention Report 37

**ENTERTAINMENT**
New Blues Club Opens 51

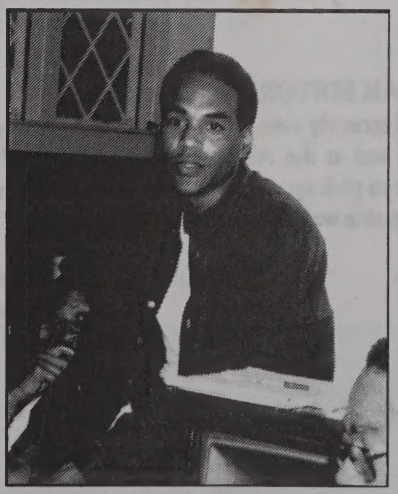
**NATIONAL EVENTS** 48

**BARS** 58

**ORGANIZATIONS** 62

*Black Gay Pride is Coming!*

*A Lady and A Woman Strikes Home*



*National Hero Phil Wilson Visits!*

# LETTERS

**DEAR EDITOR:**

I recently learned about your magazine through an article in the June 1995 issue of Sojourner. As an African American lesbian, I am thrilled to find out that there is literature specifically addressing issues relating to being African-American and gay. I would appreciate any information you could send me on how to obtain your magazine. Thank you very much!

*Michelle Smith*
*Worcester, MA*

**DEAR EDITOR:**

My name is LaRhonda Slaughter, I'm a 27 black lesbian. I have been "out of the closet" for almost 2 years. In that time I have been unable to make friends with other lesbians. Some are snooty, stuck-up, think they are above everyone else. I was hoping you could tell me where I could find some (Los Angeles, Long Beach and surrounding areas) down-to-earth gay and lesbian people.

*LaRhonda Slaughter*

**DEAR EDITOR:**

I recently visited your fair city for a family reunion and was at the Atlanta Underground Mall and was able to pick up your magazine. Besides my family this magazine was a welcome sight. Thank you.

*Guy Madison*
*Sacramento, CA*

**DEAR EDITOR:**

I was so excited to see the magazine VENUS here in the New York City area, and also all the wonderful people you have supporting it. We had many conversations about how to bring about positive change and empowerment to our southern communities. Keep up the great work and if I can be of service please call on me.

United through diversity,

*Maurice O'Brian Franklin*
*New York, New York*

**DEAR EDITOR:**

I first read a copy of your publication about two months ago and I was quite impressed. It was very enlightening and positive. I am very familiar with Atlanta, and this is even a greater sign of the strength of the African-America Gay and Lesbian Community in the Atlanta Metropolitan area.

I am interested in receiving your magazine on a regular basis, since I feel that there is so much that I am missing.

Also being a young African-American professional, who is continually striving for excellence, if there is any way I can be of assistance, please feel free to contact me. Thank you for your cooperation.

*Gregory B. West*
*Winston-Salem, NC*

**DEAR EDITOR:**

While on vacation in the beautiful city of Cincinnati, Ohio, I had the pleasure of reading your magazine.

Keep up the good work!

*Selene S. McNairy*

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Status:..... Extremely Attached

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Hometown:.. New York

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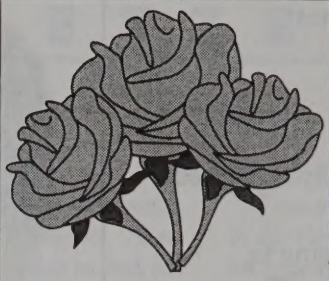

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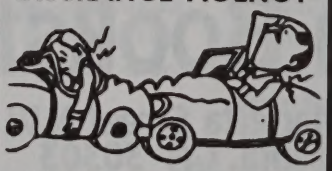

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# *A Lady* and A Woman

## Interview with Dr. Shirlene Holmes

*By Eve Wernicky*

It was perhaps her darkest moment. The bout with cancer had made everything uncertain, disruptive. But on her deathbed, the culmination of the lessons she had learned and lived prompted her to react the only way she knew how:

"I think death is a choice and I'm not done yet, I still have work to do."

So Atlanta-based playwright Dr. Shirlene Holmes, 37, fought her way back to health last year and like the characters in her plays and stories, she typifies the complex multi-faceted strong African-American women she writes about.

"I am not the same person," Holmes said, her voice full of rich cadence. "I live in immediate time. I think more locally."

And her new vigor about her work has been centralized in sending a clear message; touching her audiences and providing them a profoundly uplifting experience.

But instead of thrusting a cantankerous militant tone on issues surrounding homosexuality, women and the African-American experience, she simply lets the work speak for itself.

Her latest is the play, "A Lady and A Woman," which follows two African-American women at the end of the 19th century in their search for courage and a new life in a small town.

"The play celebrates so much and is very dear to me. It is my 'Color Purple,' "said the Georgia State University communications professor.

It is set to be published by Applause Books and an excerpt was performed at the recent Washington D.C. Gay Pride celebration.

The two central characters, Biddie Higgins, an emotionally-inclined butcher, and Miss Flora Divine, an inn owner/healer/midwife, eventually begin a spiritual love affair, and heal and soothe each other through humor, intimacy, faith and disclosure.

Sondra Barrie, the acclaimed actress who reprises her role as Miss Flora in the Emory University production ( playing Sept. 7, 9, 10 at Cannon Chapel) has been in several of Holmes' plays and called her characters intense and powerful.

*Dr. Shirlene Holmes, author of "A Lady and a Woman" and "The Cotsville Stories."*

"(Miss Flora) is a challenging character to play," Barrie said. "From the field of spiritual connectedness, she is full of pain yet has a lot of humor about life and the life she's lived. All of Shirlene's characters are strong, in touch with who they are and honest about where they are going."

And who these characters are come from Holmes' experience and women-dominated upbringing.

"I feel my work is very much of my experience. Being African-American is dramatic, real life is profound and dramatic," Holmes said.

*Brenda Porter, starring in the role of Biddie in "A Lady and a Woman" by Dr. Shirlene Holmes.*

**Venus Magazine:** Do you think your characters branch from your path of self-discovery?

**Shirlene Holmes:** "I don't think art comes from one place. I see Miss Flora as myself, but she is also a lot of women. I always portray characters with dimension in my life that have been profound."

**VM:** Your acclaimed *Cotsville Stories*, a collection of fictional vignettes — some which have been featured in previous Venus issues — seems to center around small-town Southern folk much like some of your other work.

**SH:** "I've always been enthralled by regular folk because they learn so much from living. And I've always loved the Southern flair because you can say a whole lot with twisted English. Southerners seem to capture passion and I hope to try to make people feel affirmed."

**VM:** You grew up in a matriarch on the southside of Queens, New York. What is the most important lesson you learned from your mother?

**SH:** "That God is. My mother would pray and things would happen. She was a single mother at 19, but was determined that we do better than she did. Not attending college was unquestionable looked up to her. I learned how to be feminine from her — not just the lace stockings, but the importance of being a woman."

"I think every woman has the capacity of being feminine, having grace, being a healer as well as being powerful — able to carry the load. I cannot worry about attaching labels to oneself. God is male and female. We all have a balance."

**VM:** How essential is the concept of spirituality to your work?

**SH:** "Spirituality is essential to my existence. For most people, sexuality is their first identity. It certainly is not mine. I don't think I'm a lesbian before I'm black or a woman. Once you are in the spirit, there is no gender, no black or white. We are whole."

Dr. Holmes will lecture at Emory's Dobbs University Center on Thursday, Sept. 7, 1995 at 4:00 PM in Room 220. She will read from *The Cotsville Stories* and other works.

---

Eve Wernicky is a freelance writer and a former journalist of The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

*Sondra Barrie, starring in the role of Ms. Flora Divine in "A Lady and a Woman" by Dr. Shirlene Holmes.*

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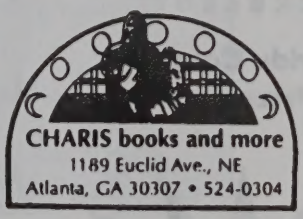


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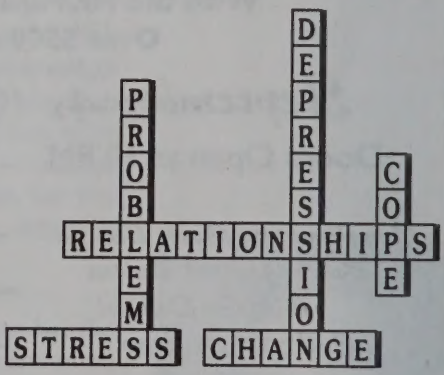


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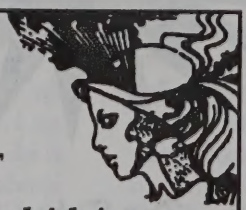

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# Racism Under the Rainbow

By Beryl Jackson (B.J.) Part III of III

*For some time, I've wondered what the Atlanta gay and lesbian community is doing about its internal racism? There seems to be a general awareness of the separateness in the community, yet a deafening silence about its existence. With no foreseeable time as to when we would start talking about it. I seized the opportunity I had to set up a public forum. I began by talking to people I know and don't know about getting together and talking about racism in the gay and lesbian community. The end result was a Charis Thursday night program held at the first Existentialist Congregation on July 27th. The program was co-sponsored by Charis and various organizations in the community. The program was held in the form of a community meeting and is the first in a series of dialogues within the community which asked, explored, and answered questions concerning racism in the gay and lesbian community.*

The meeting was attended by over 150 people and the discussion centered around many forms of racism and racist attitudes within the community. One of the ways we were asked to look at racism was the presentation of the gay and lesbian community and who's in that picture. The speaker emphasized that the lack of "people of color" in the picture meant all "people of color" not just African Americans. This was a point that was to be repeated many times through the night, that racism is not just an issue between blacks and whites.

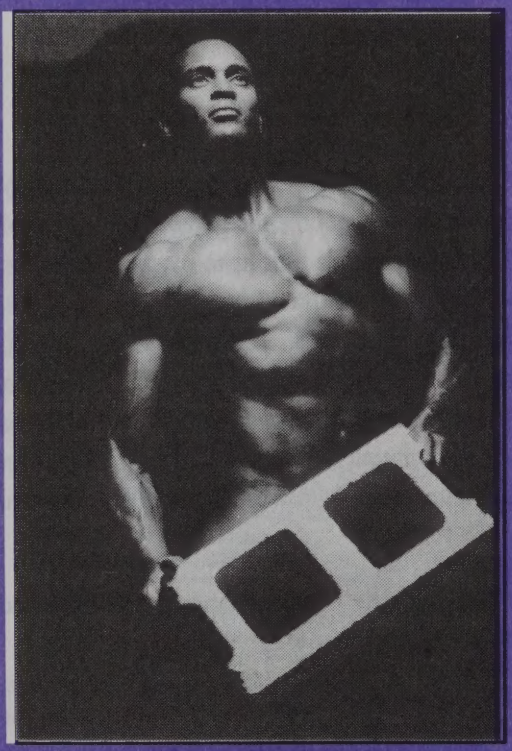
Another speaker said she believed individuals must do things about racism not the community, meaning white people must challenge other white people about their racist attitudes and statements and be backed up by whites who agree with the challenge. She said she believed it must begin with individual consciousness.

The differences among people and the importance of accepting these differences was talked about. We were told by one Native American who said she grew up on a reservation that "assimilation equals distinction" in her mind.

The issue of how people of color are asked to join this protest march or come to this rally to stop homophobic legislature and why nothing is being said about the current attack on affirmative action which is a racist attack on freedom in this country was also addressed. The white community was asked why there is no organizing around this issue. The answer was that the challenge for white people is to get involved in

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17

# 9½ Weeks



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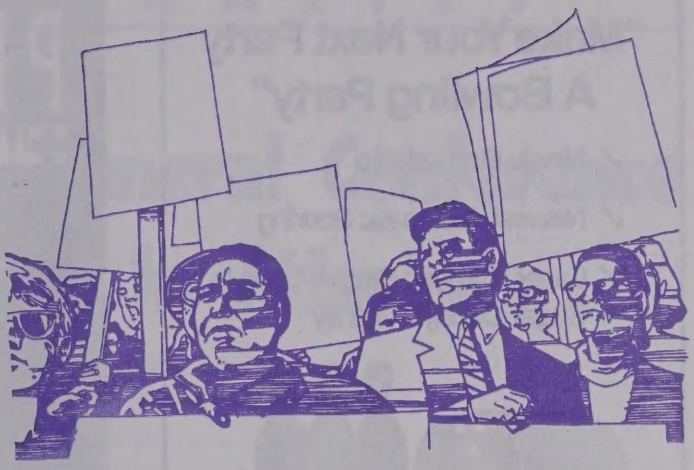
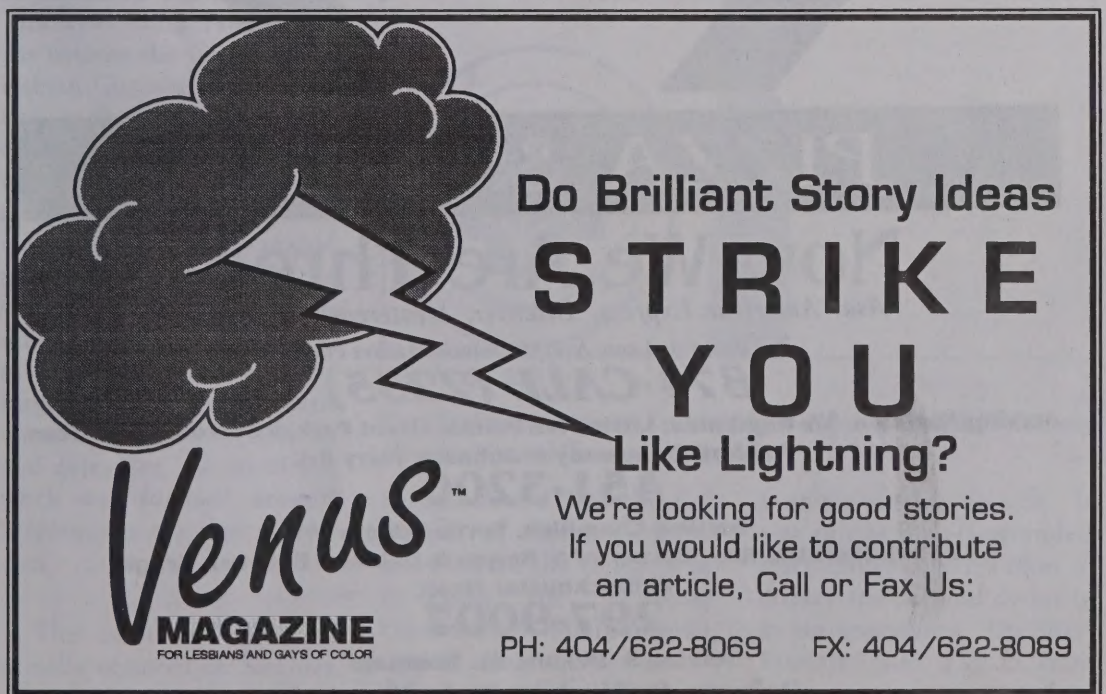
issues that don't directly involve them.

One of the most important lessons for me took place in front of mine and everyone else's eyes. A young woman rose to speak about the complicity of racism and how she felt we had all just viewed an act of racism and no one challenged it. She referred to an announcement that had been given by another young black woman and co-worker and the fact that a white man got up and restated everything the woman had just said. She asked that white people address the issue so that the man could feel supported in challenging his racism. The point being made was that the woman had put out the information eloquently and there was no need for it to be validated by the white male. Black people are capable of doing things, making decisions without it being approved by whites. This raised the defenses of the



man who proclaimed immediately he was not a racist but who called the next morning to say he'd learned a lot at the meeting and was thankful it was held.

Although I was glad to see so many people at the forum and felt that everyone had taken something of importance with them from it and despite the fact people expressed the desire to do it again and want to do it on a regular basis, there is a sadness within me due to the fact that this is 1995 and this seems to be just the first step in a very long process. When does the rainbow really become inclusive of everyone and when does a picture of the gay and lesbian community in Atlanta represent all spectrums of the rainbows within this community. When do we stop all the talking and simply DO IT!!!!

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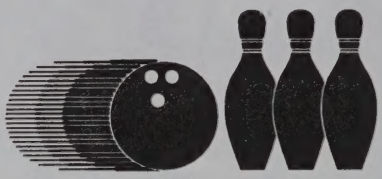

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# UFMCC 17th General Conference Convenes In Atlanta

The Seventeenth General Conference of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches convened at the Westin Peachtree Hotel in Atlanta, July 23-30, 1995 with the theme "All Things are Possible!" The 27-year-old denomination that evolved from a meeting of 12 concerned individuals who embraced the dream of it's founder and moderator, The Rev. Elder Troy Perry, has become the largest gay & lesbian Christian denomination in the world. There are over 400 congregations worldwide, reaching out to disenfranchised gay, lesbian, transgendered and bisexual persons in the context of the Christian Church. The gathering in Atlanta was historic in many ways. It was the largest-ever attended, with more than 2,000 registrants and delegates. Much of the work was focused around preparing for the next generation.

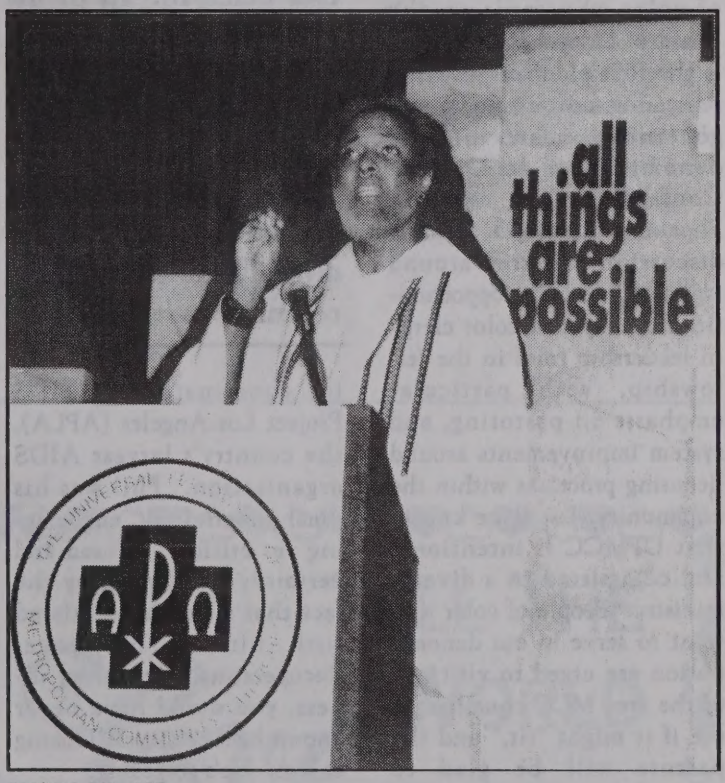



PHOTO BY: KES

*Dr. Elias Farajaje-Jones was keynote speaker at the Metropolitan Community Church's National Convention in Atlanta.*

The unofficial kick-off actually occurred on Saturday evening, July 22nd, when the denomination's Department of People of Colors—DPOC (now called the Ministry of Diversity in Spiritual Community—MDISC) welcomed early arrivals and delegates in their traditional evening worship service. It was spirited, well-attended and intentional in it's effort to display the cultural diversity in our community. Dr. Elias-Farajaje-Jones, a Ph.D. from

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

Howard University, Washington, D.C. in its Department of Religion, delivered a powerful sermon entitled "Let the Dead Bury the Dead." Spectacular music was provided by the Gospel choir of MCC Washington, D.C., a 30-voice group comprised largely of African American gay and lesbian people.

An African American Leadership Caucus was convened on Monday, July 24th, led by Rev. Elder Darlene Garner, one of three persons of color who serve on the Board of Elders. Rev. Garner is the first elder of primarily African-descent elected to the governing board of the denomination at General Conference XVI held in Phoenix, AZ in 1993. A frank discussion occurred around issues of improving opportunities for people of color clergy in leadership roles in the fellowship, with particular emphasis on pastoring, and system improvements around licensing processes within the community. Let it be known that UFMCC is intentional and committed to a diverse ministry. People of color who want to serve in our denomination are urged to visit one of the area MCC churches, to see if it might "fit," and the pastors will be glad to acquaint you with opportunities to serve!

First MCC-Atlanta dedicated their new sanctuary on Sunday, July 23rd with great fanfare. Moderator of UFMCC, The Rev. Elder Troy Perry preached; most of the Elders were present. The worship was spiritually-deep and the music stunning, and unbelievable. They are located at 1370 Tullie Rd. NE. Visit them soon.

On Wednesday, July 26th, the DPOC/MDISC Luncheon featured Mr. Phil Wilson of Los Angeles, CA, public-policy coordinator for AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA), the country's largest AIDS organization. Phil was his usual powerful self, encouraging yet critical, focused and certainly challenged by the fact that a Latino translated with him as he spoke. Recuperating from earlier illness, you would have never known he'd been sick, looking at him! He's gorgeous!

**Many people have asked me why I'm not in an all-black denomination like Unity. I believe that there is a place for all of us everywhere. We must seek to be where we are called to be. It's important for them to have me there, reminding them of the continuing challenge to diversify and remain fully committed to inclusion.**

Thursday's AIDS Luncheon was keynoted by Ms. Dorothy Triplett, who is the Assistant Director for Minority and Other Special Populations for the Office of the Associate Director for HIV/AIDS, at the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta. I've heard Dorothy speak before. She challenged us with her spiritually-based philosophy, and always being able to impart current knowledge abut the movement of the disease in our community.

There were several diversity-focused workshops offered us a part of a tremendous bank of learning opportunities. I shared in one entitled "Same Enemy—Different Target." We focused on learning how to cope with the so-called "Christian Right."

On Saturday, we marched to the King Center to place a wreath of remembrance at the tomb of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It was an incredible sight to see hundreds of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people marching through "the 'hood," rainbow banners blowing, respectfully and curiously being looked at by the residents. It was an amazing, impressive sight, and deeply moving when we stood in front of Martin's crypt and said, "Thank You."

UFMCC is currently negotiating the purchase of a new $3 million headquarters in West Hollywood, CA. It is a wonderful piece of property that will enable us to meet the needs of our community for years to come. Rev. Perry challenged us to double the size of congregations, large and small, and to "get on-line." We are an internet-active community on-line for the future and preparing for the next generation. Contributions to the Capital Campaign to raise

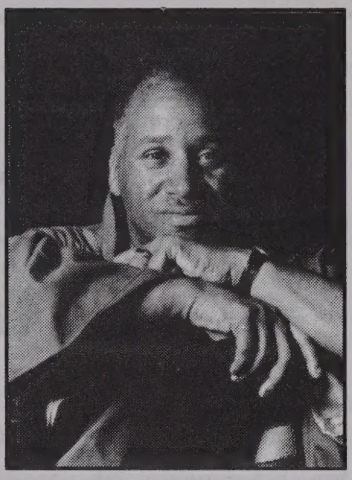
funds for the building can be made, tax-deductible, to the current fellowship office located at 5300 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 304, Los Angeles, CA 90029.

I am proud to be in UFMCC. Many people have asked me why I'm not in an all-black denomination like Unity. I believe that there is a place for all of us everywhere. We must seek to be where we are called to be. It's important for them to have me there, reminding them of the continuing challenge to diversify and remain fully committed to inclusion. We live in a multi-cultural world, with many different kinds of people. We need to appreciate our diversity and come to know that in the Divine Creator's mind, "There's Room at the Table for ALL!"

Well, that's UFMCC's 17th General Conference in a nutshell from this writer's perspective! Thanks, "Hotlanta" for being a proud host. In 1997, we go international, convening General Conference 18 in Sydney, Australia! May the God of your Understanding be with you and empower you to be all that you can be as you journey forward.

---

*Rev. Herbert E. Evans is the Member Services Director at We The People, and AIDS advocacy-group in Philadelphia, PA. He is transfer-clergy in UFMCC and serves the denomination in a variety of capacities in AIDS Ministry and other designated committee work. He travels, speaks often about AIDS/HIV, recovery issues, and*



*Rev. Herbert E. Evans*

*of course, his passion, spirituality. He and his partner Mr. Todd Conway, live lovingly together in a fashionable apartment in South Philadelphia. We welcome Rev. Evans to Venus Magazine as a contributing writer!*

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# IF IT'S REALLY *Love* TELL THE WORLD

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# Labels

*By Nyack Feliz*

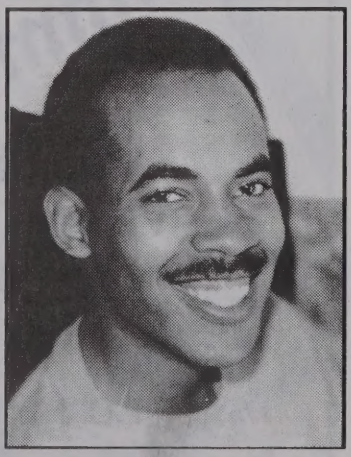
*Black, Puerto rican, Latino, Gay, Fag, Negro, Maricon, Pato, Loca, these and others have all been "labels" that people have used to try and put me in a category. People have a tendency to want everything wrapped up in a pretty little package, with a bow and a card. Whenever something doesn't fit into one of our stereotypes we automatically dismiss it, or try to beat it into something we can recognize, and call it a name. In the process, we end up labeling ourselves, giving ourselves names, beating ourselves to fit into something everyone else can recognize. My question is, do we need them?*

When I first came to the United States, as a young 18 year old private in the Army, I was confronted with the task of identifying myself. Not only did I have to go through what every young gay person has to endure, but I also had to figure out what I was. This was something that I was not used to, having to define myself on the basis of my color and origin. I honestly did not know there was a difference between being black and being Puerto rican. I was both, in my eyes, but it wasn't enough, it was not the same to be African American or Hispanic.

I distinctly remember the first time I actually had to think about this issue. A fellow man of color came up to me and asked, "so what are you, black or Puerto rican." For a moment, I hesitated, the question was not clear to me at that time. He saw me thinking about it and dismissed me as some brother trying to sell out. I couldn't even understand English very well, never mind this concept of separating myself into categories and to choose which one was more important. For a long time after that incident, I felt the need to define myself. But no matter what I did to find some comfortable middle ground were I could fit, people always found some other category, some new twist to the labeling game.

Panamanian, Turkish, French, Dominican, Top, Bottom, are just a few of the never ending niches that people keep finding to put me in. Mind you that I am not free of sin myself. I too find comfortable names for certain kinds of people with certain kinds of looks. Its something that happens without even thinking about it, and this is what scares me. Have we gotten so predictable that we can tell what someone is just by their appearance? Is it fair to limit ourselves by our vision? I think not.

It has been a long time since I first boarded that plane heading to the land of opportunity, and I have learned a great deal. It really doesn't matter what people think I am, as long as I know, and as long as I am comfortable with it. People can look at me and think what ever they want, but if they can't get past the initial impression, then they will never know of the hidden treasures that lay inside. It will be their loss. So, do we need these labels? That is not up to me to decide. Look within yourself, I am sure the answer is there.



*"Labels" author Nyack Feliz*

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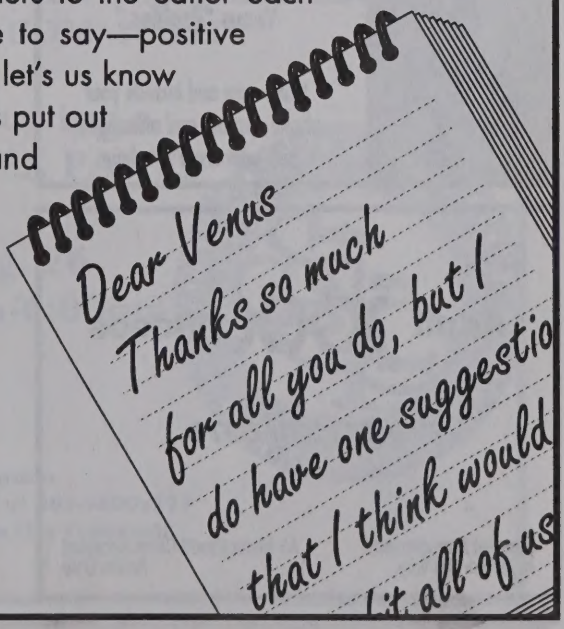


*Keep Writing Those Letters*

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## PROFILE OF A MAN

Name: . . . . . Gregory Victorianne

Age: . . . . . 35

Status: . . . . . Single

Career: . . . . . Community Educator

Hometown: . . Chicago, IL

Latest Book: . "Afrekete: An Anthology of Black Lesbian Writing" by Catherine McKinley

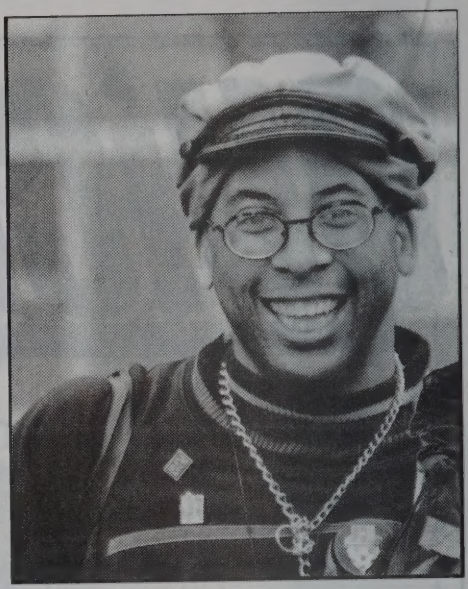

PHOTO BY: RON SINGLETON

*Gregory resides in Roxbury, Mass., and serves as a public policy coordinator and community educator for MOCAA, Men of Color Against AIDS. He most enjoys collecting Afro-Caribbean artifacts and listening to his favorite Incognito CD's.*


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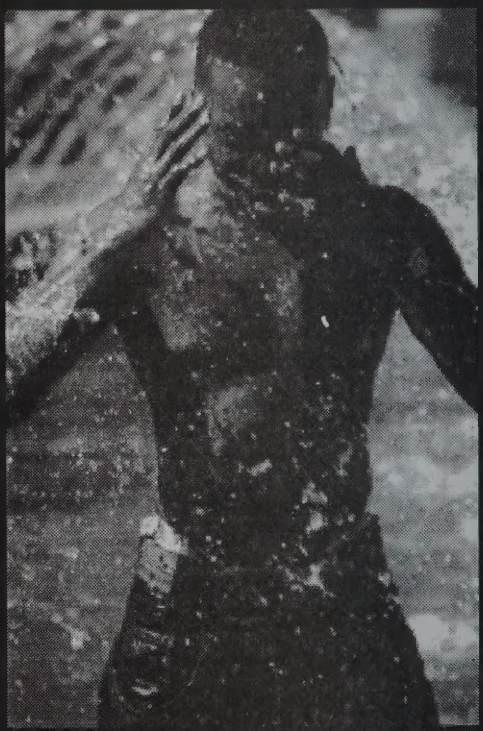

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☐ Yes ☐ No

3) How often do you volunteer for any nonprofit organization?

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☐ 2-4 Hrs./Yr. ☐ None

4) How many African-American gay men or lesbians do you know who are HIV+?

☐ 1 - 4 ☐ 5 - 9 ☐ more than 10

5) If you were available to donate your time, what type skills do you have to give?

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# Stroking the Flames: Intimacy Enhancement Tips

By Carla Anderson, MA

*Some of us are under the impression that if we seek counseling then we must really be in crisis. This is especially true if we are in a relationship and couples' therapy is suggested or recommended (or even threatened). However, there are many non-crisis issues that may land a couple in therapy. A relationship that continues over a long period of time may eventually hit a sensuality speedbump. In other words, the happy couple is cruising along in that beginning happy blissful honeymoon period when BAM! Suddenly one wants to be intimate more while the other one less or maybe even not at all. Friday and Saturday nights isn't predictably spent making love anymore and you are lucky if you get a peck on the check from your lover who used to kiss you from head to toe increased communication is needed at this time to take the relationship to the next level if it is to continue to be a source of fulfillment for each of the parties involved.*

There are some activities that we can engage in with our partner to get the juices going again and stoke the flames of sensuality. Many of these are found in self-help books on sexuality and romance. Other suggestions are from couples who have happily discovered them on their own. A first step the couple can take is to make dates with each other so that certain days of the week or month are designated as days just for couple stuff. This is especially helpful for couples involving children or a partner that travels a lot for business. During these dates, the focus of the conversation should be similar to what we used to talk about when dating. That is, focusing on finding out more about one another, especially sexually. There are a number of different reference points we can use to get the conversation going. One is using the history that had developed thus far between our partner and ourselves. We can reminisce about a recent encounter or reinforce to our partner what we enjoyed about past experiences. This is also the optimum time to talk about what you would like differently or new. Try to avoid talking about sexual likes and dislikes in the bedroom. It works best if it is in a setting where our partner does not feel immediate pressure to perform or could feel criticized.

Another subject one can talk about on their date are each other's fantasies. One should first check in with their partner if talking about fantasies with one another would make them extremely uncomfortable. If not, then this is generally an area that couples can have fun and frolic. Fantasies repertoire. Again it does not matter whether the fantasy involves a faceless person one's partner or the cute clerk at the mall. If each partner makes the other feel welcome to share their fantasies with one another, then more likely the playmate will be ourselves and not anyone else. If one finds they have a completely empty rolodex of fantasies, then we can share with our partner what we have heard about or seen in the media arena

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30

that we found titillating. This again could lead into what we would like to try, experiment with or just talk about in more detail.

This leads to another enhancement tip: phone sex. Often, most of us work and some of us work and some of us work two jobs. What better way to connect with each other during those 10-12 hour days than via the telephone. Of course, discretion is highly advised. There is no better way for your co-workers to know you more than you would like than if your conversation is inadvertently broadcast throughout the store or office. However, if privacy is available, one could tease, tempt and entice one's partner or the excitement could be the build up to designated date night or the upcoming weekend. Many couples report that once they were able to separate pleasuring each other verbally from the actual act, they then felt more freedom to express themselves.

If phone fantasies are a little bit too risky for some of us then leaving our lovers notes, poems or letters may feel more comfortable. These can be both hidden or placed out in the open. Some suggested places are the bedroom, the bathroom mirror, one's car, the briefcase or purse (or backpack) the refrigerator or the underwear drawer. Wherever one feels one could catch their partner by surprise without embarrassing them would be a good place. One could even get high tech and leave them a voice mail, fax them a coded or blatant message or leave them an e-mail on their desktop or laptop. Some couples have even designated codes they leave each other on their pagers that quickly bring a smile to their face even in a crowded board room or department store floor.

PHOTO BY: RON SINGLETON

Another suggested way of letting our partner know we are thinking about them when we are not around is to buy romantic books, magazines or articles for one another to read. The subject matter could range from the mildly romantic to the highly erotic. Also discretely, one could leave copies of highlighted passages for our favorite person. In addition, a book or magazine could be left open to just the right page for our lover to come across. Other couples have found that reading to one another enhances their sensuality. Creating a physical mood along with 'storytime' could increase the overall effect. Some suggested settings could include a bubble bath, a dimly lit living room with plenty of comfortable pillows, incense or candles. Achieving comfort in a potentially awkward situation may increase the chances of a repeat reading.

One final suggestion involves an overall attitude shift so that, again, the relationship can proceed to the next level. This is to re-examine each other's definition of sex and sensuality. Do both just focus on the act or have to be conclude by it. If so, then expanding one's horizon may help to alleviate boredom and open up many other avenues. By including in our definition of sex the acts of just holding just caressing, just massaging, just kissing or just whatever, then the concept becomes much more expanded. That is not a typographical error that I utilized the word just so many times instead, it is to emphasize that with sensuously enhancing a relationship comes not just thinking of more creative positions but more creative options. Remember, our biggest sex organ is between our ears. It is the inclusion of all our senses in this dance that could open many doors for the couple who happily discovers them.

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# Black Gay Pride Atlanta '95

*by Charlene Cothran*

Although no 'formal' committee has surfaced to organize Atlanta's Black Gay Pride celebration, a seriously exciting weekend is being planned by a few of Atlanta's black gay and lesbian businesses.

Of course everybody knows that the children flood into Atlanta every Labor Day weekend from all over the country. So what makes this Labor Day special?! Maybe it's the excitement surrounding the '96 Olympic Games. Maybe it's the freedom and Pride we feel having our own publication. Maybe it's the heat and we've just all gone crazy!! What ever it is has got the kids primping and planning!

The first African-American AIDS memorial and candlelight vigil is the only place to be on the weekends opening night, Friday, Sept. 1, 7pm-10pm. This event will take place at the intimate Water Works Park, only minutes from downtown. We'll celebrate the memory of our fallen brothers and sisters as we wave and bop to the live music of Atlanta's hottest gospel music ensemble Charese Stephens and B. Chase William's. The finale will be performed by the duet of Collette Robinson (formerly of Moca) and Jomandi's J. Karen Thomas, who brought the house down at this years Atlanta Gospel Music Awards. Since AIDS is a disease that affect people from ALL walks of life, it is totally appropriate to encourage your friends, coworkers and family to attend.

PHOTO BY RON SINGLETON

*Mandy Carter (r) and Pat Hussain (l) at this year's National Black Gay Pride in Washington, D.C.*

On Saturday morning, though, you definitely want to leave your mother at home and press your way to Kalo's Coffee House for our Soul to Soul Brunch. Enjoy soft jazz, live, by Barry Bruce and Co. and an open mic poetry SLAM from 10:30am-2:30pm. A delectable menu is available. Who knows , you may even find a dazzling date for the evening.

O.K. it's Saturday nite! Your looking great! Feeling good and smelling delicious! Where are you headed? Everybody's first stop is the Radisson Hotel for the official Black Gay Pride Atlanta Party! Hot models work the runway in the latest club attire during a New York style house party! Door opens at 11:00pm. The event is sponsored by Venus Magazine, M-Press Modeling Agency and Physikos at Ansley.

Check out the national events calendar (on page 40) for activities and always remember to PLAY SAFE!!

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**FRIDAY SEPT. 1**

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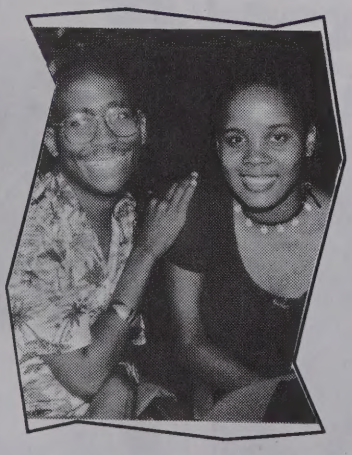

Delectable Menu Available!! Kalo's Coffee House, 1248 Clairmont Road. 325-3733, 10:30 am til 2:30 pm. $3 Suggested Donation.

**SATURDAY SEPT. 2**

## THE OFFICIAL BLACK GAY PRIDE PARTY

Come Celebrate the Magic at the Radisson Hotel Ballroom. Courtland and International, Downtown Atlanta.
$7 Door. Doors Open 11 PM.

**SATURDAY SEPT. 2**

# Another Page from Our "Family Album"

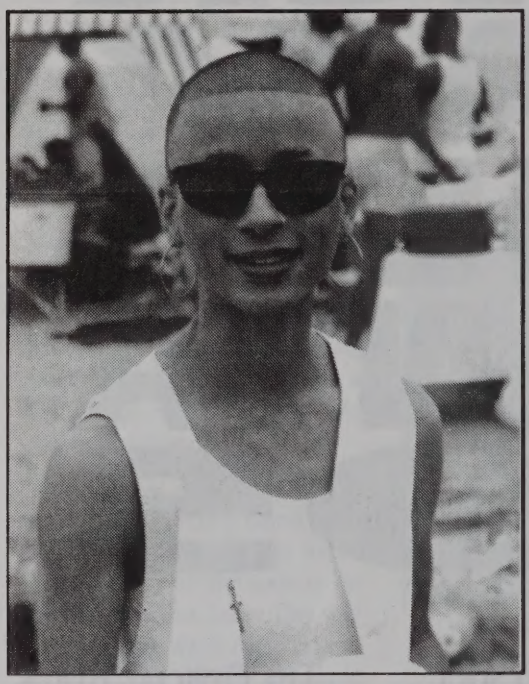

PHOTO BY: RON SINGLETON

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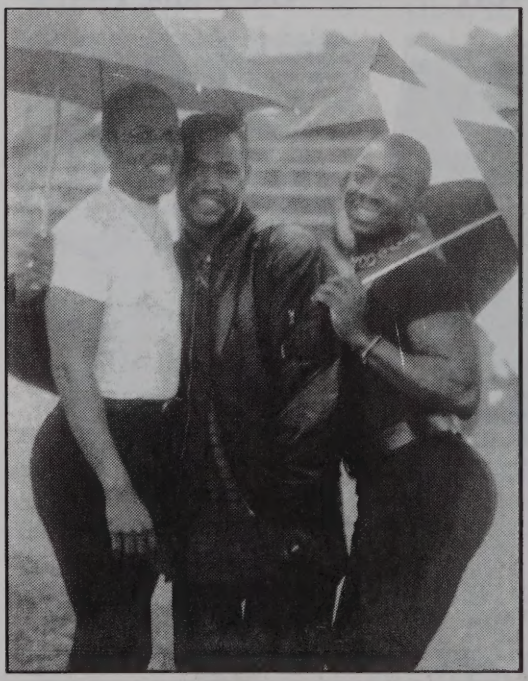

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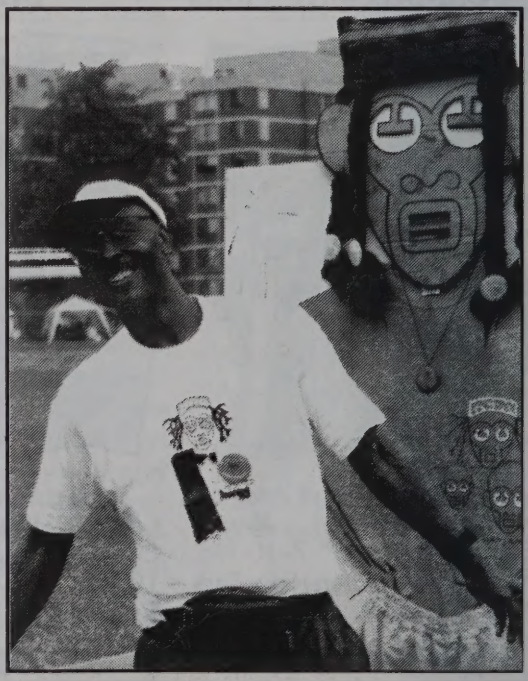
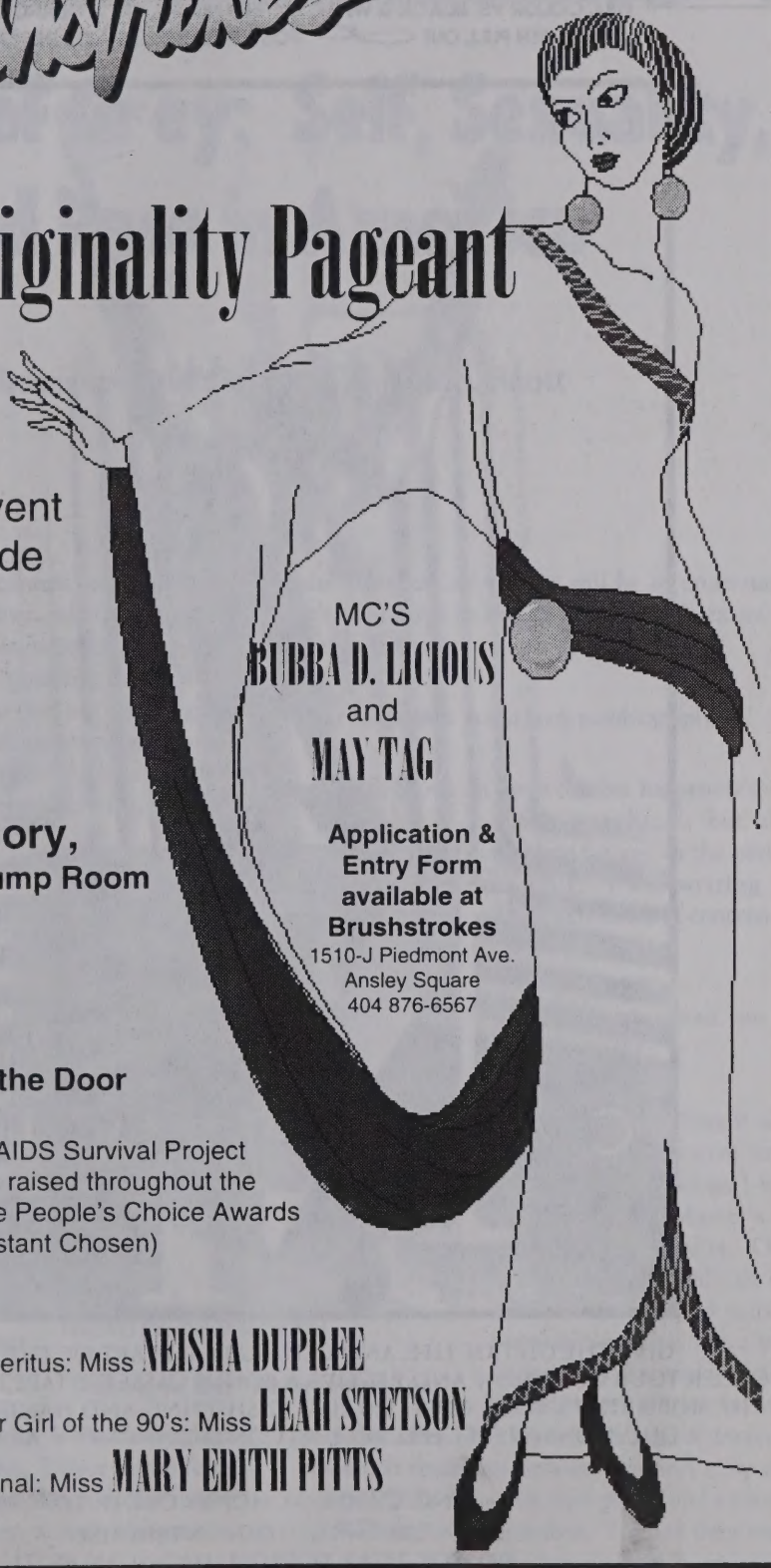


PHOTO BY: RON SINGLETON

# Brushstrokes

# Miss Originality Pageant



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# Shades of Grey: Self, Sexuality, and Race in America

## An Interview with author Darieck S. Scott

*by Douglas E. Jones*

Traitor to the Race cannot be dismissed as another black-boy-loves-white-boy story. Such a reflection is too pat, ridiculously easy and far from the truth in these troubling times where people, black, white, or otherwise, are searching for simple answers to the difficult questions of communal responsibility, individual freedom and the meaning of a worthwhile, substantive life. In this, his first novel, Darieck S. Scott takes the reader on an introspective trip that has more to do with questions of self-identity and courage than the problematic dynamics of race in America. There is a collision of realities here which demonstrate the polemics the main character, an African-American brother named Kenneth, must juggle while existing within the multiple traumas of a homophobic and racist America and a homophobic and ignorant African America. This is important reading, valuable stuff and Darieck has beautifully captured the tension of a Black man at the crossroads of various points in his life. But, Traitor to the Race also reaches beyond itself and demands the reader remember what it was to learn of one's blackness in white America...or what it will be to understand one's whiteness in the diversity which exists in America today.

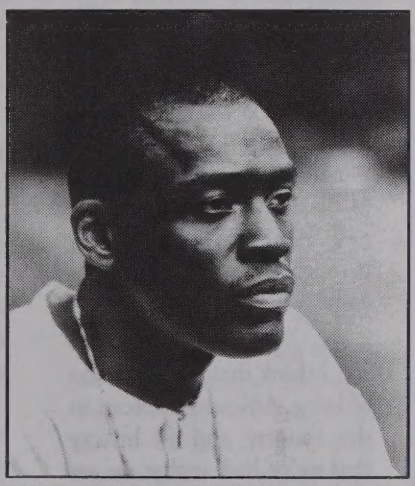

PHOTO BY: JULIAN OKWU

*"Traitor to the Race" author Darieck Scott.*

**Venus Magazine:** Is the book autobiographical?

**Darieck S. Scott:** In terms of what happens it's not autobiographical, but the themes of it are for the period in which I was writing it. They were issues of concern to me at that time.

**VM:** What inspired you to write the book?

**DSS:** I started writing it as a short story in a creative writing class at Yale when I was working on my Master's in Afro-American studies. One of the instructors said that we should actually try to write a novel because that was a way to get out there and get published; short stories are not seen that often. You know, I was kind of drawn to these two characters because the short story was essentially the first game they played and a couple of their first conversations. I guess they were

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38

working through some issues that I needed to work through. That kind of led me on. Also the form worked for me at that time—writing in small vignettes that are laced together. I just worked on it. I started in the summer of 1990—I was supposed to start working at a law firm, but I quit the day before and started building the novel from the short story.

VM: Those vignettes, I guess the styles and forms that you play with, your use of them—specifically the fantasy and the eroticism—are those meant to heighten the reader's awareness of Kenneth's struggles and his attempts to reconcile himself to himself?

DSS: Yes, they are and that happened in a way that I was not entirely clear about when I was writing it. In retrospect, it looks to me that the fragmentary style is a way of charting Kenneth's relationship to his own identity and how complicated that is. Also, it represents how multifaceted, how multivalent that relationship is. I think what the novel was trying to do is to track the way in which a Black gay identity—this particular Black gay identity—would have to exist and have lots of different relationships to the rest of the world, so that Kenneth is looking out at other people, fantasizing about them, pulling aspects back into himself, projecting his own stuff onto other people and in the process of doing that—working in his unconscious—developing who he is and bringing that to consciousness, which I hope he begins to do by the end of the novel. So, it represents the complicated process of the relationship between fantasy and politics and who you are in terms of sex, sexuality, eroticism, and desire. I am trying to put all those things in play with that structure and what's going on in those particular structures.

VM: Ummmm. Collision of several different questions, I'll try to separate them: First, 'inhabitation,' the living through of other people's experiences—I guess a process of becoming something else, experiencing something else through someone else and structuring that Black gay identity. Do you feel that we, as Black folks in a white America—to stretch further, as Black gay folks in a white gay America—are living through those inhabitations daily?

DSS: I think that the condition of being African-American in this country, and the history that we've had, is that we are both integral to and a part of this culture, the whiter culture—whatever you call American culture, whatever that composite is—as well as never feeling quite at home in it and being outside of it. So you get to the case of a Black gay person, someone who is conscious of themselves as such, that you are both within the African-American culture and the African-American community, but because of all the silence around the presence of gay men and lesbians in the African-American community and the way in which we're not really included in representations of ourselves as African-Americans, we are both fully part of that and outside of that as well. It's a fragmented perspective given what we're told; it has to become something which is unified and united and coherent and whole for each of us by what we do with it. We have to come into the consciousness of being able to stand in all those different places and bring them all together. Inhabitation, in a broader sense, would involve looking at all those particular pieces that you get thrown at you from the culture about what is to be Black or what it is to be a Black male or what it is to be Black, male, and gay or what it is to be gay or whatever and how those things get separated—that's sort of what Kenneth is doing. He's taking pieces that are given to him and then transforming them into something which makes sense to him. I think that is the central theme of the novel: something about being able to resist whatever labels you get, but at the same time knowing that you're taking part in some of them because you live in the

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culture and you can't separate yourself from it altogether. You have to find your own place within all of that.

VM: We come to see Kenneth through a slow process of evolution—watching his frustration and growth through his experiences and fantasies. Does the inhabitation underscore the overall taboo—in terms of societal and communal definitions—of being Black and gay, of being Black and gay and involved with a white man?

DSS: Yes, I think it does go along with that very well and I think the title of the novel—the idea of being a traitor to the race—comments on that as well. For Kenneth that is the central theme, the label that he has to resist. He has to find some way to insist that he still belongs in the community. Yes, those things are being worked together. I think the idea of being in an inter-racial relationship, which is probably the easiest way to look at the novel and say that's what it's about, is the catalyst for him to have something to struggle with that's tangible. However, ultimately the novel is about Kenneth finding a way to resist all the labels which I was talking about and complying with them and finding where he is in the midst of them.

VM: The Black community dealing with its issues of homophobia....are we struggling to survive as a community and can we not "afford" to prioritize our existence in terms of the civil rights issues versus the rights of Black gays and lesbians or can we do it at the same time?

DSS: Is it that question, 'Are you African-American first or are you gay first'?

VM: Yeah, that question.

DSS: That question. Ummm...First, I don't see an inherent contradiction between the idea that we are in a struggle for our existence in this country and the fact that insisting that your being gay or lesbian or whatever means that you shouldn't be fully included in the community and think that the issues which keep you from being fully included shouldn't be addressed. I think that those things kind of go together because, ultimately, what Black liberation is about is about being able to be fully human and fully a part of whatever community you happen to be in and being able to be released from all the strictures that keep you from being able to do that and certainly one of those strictures both within the African-American culture and the whiter culture has to do with sexuality—and not just for gays and lesbians, but for heterosexuals, for women, for whatever. I guess the very idea that you should postpone some aspect of the struggle, the idea that you're supposed to put something on hold so that the other thing can get done, I don't think that works. I think as a practical matter it just doesn't work.. You don't really have a community if what you're doing is faking it, pretending that some vital part of it—and Black gays and lesbians have been a vital part of the community—doesn't exist. You're not effecting community, you're not building one, you're just imposing your particular view of what you want on the rest of the community and if people are falling in line with it, that's what they're doing, but it's not really true. You will be sowing the seeds of your own destruction because you can't really face up to what's going on. It's almost like that's a sort of axiom of politics and culture in the world: You can't continually repress things, you can't continually push them off and pretend they're not there because they always, always come back. The longer you repress them the more violent they are when they return....and the more destructive.

VM: And we've finally gotten to the boiling point.

DSS: Well, there's a contemporary moment we've been living in since at least the mid-80's where we, all of us Black gay and lesbian people who are conscious of ourselves as being that, are making ourselves

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known more. There's a lot more to be done there. As far as reaching the boiling point maybe this is it, but there may be worse to come yet because I still don't see that the issues are being taken up as much as they ought to be. We need to be concerned how we, as African-Americans, are treating each other around these issues of sexuality. There's a great deal of resistance in broaching the issue and there's been a long contemporary history, at least since the 1960s and the Black Power Movement, of saying that, 'Oh, it's just a white man's disease,' etc. All that kind of stuff really has to be addressed and really has to be deeply reformulated. That is what I would consider one of the most pressing issues for us to deal with. I don't know how we do it, but when I say the worse is yet to come, I think the worst is coming around that issue of struggling to get everybody else to say, 'OK, you're a part of us.' We're going to have to deal with our homophobia and that's very difficult. Very difficult.

VM: And it's very clear in the book that that's Kenneth's ultimate struggle: Him coming to his own identity as a Black gay man and then dealing with other Black gay men.

DSS: Yeah. Yeah. And then the larger issue stemming from that is dealing with other Black men period. The first part of that is him dealing with other Black gay men, then the next part is him dealing with Black men in general, then the construct of Black masculinity and the Black community, and he moves on from there. And all of that certainly doesn't happen in the book, but what does get done in the novel is the first part of that begins to open up for him. It's a long process that we all have to deal with because we live in a society where we're so systematically degraded it makes it very difficult for really loving and respectful relationships to occur easily between us: Between Black men and Black women, between Black gay men and each other, and so on. There's a lot of work to be done.

VM: What are you commenting on about the state of Black-white relations in America?

DSS: (laughs) I don't know that I'm really commenting that much on it. I think the state of it in general is pretty bad, but I don't know how much of it I deal with in the novel. I certainly have Evan (Kenneth's lover) in the position where he's having to deal with some of these issues. But what I like about what I did with him is that his consideration of these issues with Kenneth, with Kenneth's relationship to his (Kenneth's) cousin's death, and Kenneth's relationship to him (Evan), makes him consider his own role playing in society as a white man, as a white man who has particular kind of looks—soap opera kind of looks—and having him confront that stuff and confront what it is to be white. I think that's clearly an issue that has to be addressed because one of the biggest impediments to white people understanding racism is that they generally don't have to think of themselves as being white, unless there's some race issue that's suddenly thrown at them and then they bond together against Black people or whatever it is that they do. Whiteness, therefore, depends on some definition of blackness and he (Evan) kind of begins to investigate that. I do think that that's a necessary thing for white people to do. Again, that's another thing that's not easy for them to do and in some ways it is counter-intuitive because in some ways their power depends upon partly pretending that they're just human and largely unaware [of this race issue in America].

VM: And it's an issue that they usually don't have to face until they're well into adulthood, whereas we usually have to face it very young in childhood.

DSS: Right. Much earlier, much earlier.

VM: Did this story evolve of itself?

CONTINUED ON PAGE 41

DSS: You mean independent of my life?

VM: Yeah.

DSS: No, it had similarities to my life. I think that the reason for this story at the time that I wrote it, is that I was just coming out around that same period, which to me meant having to relieve some of the constraints on my own expression that I had really adhered to for a very long time—some of the rules of convention of what it meant to be whatever it was that I was supposed to be—and then some time after I came out I fell in love with someone who was white and I had that whole issue to deal with because I certainly never expected that to happen. I did not envision it, it was certainly not my fantasy of what my life would be like. And, you know, I kind of realized that was not the central issue, that there were a lot of other issues involved in it and I guess that it was a matter of instinct to follow this particular story because I had other stories I could have used in a novel and some of those may come to the fore later. But at that time this was something that I needed to do because it was all about what was happening for me at the same time. I needed to figure out who I was in relationship to what kind of labels were out there for me, what kind of visions were out there. Writing the story for me was part of that process, therefore it was very vital. Funny, now I look back on it and I say, 'Oh, I'm really over that issue'.

VM: So, although it's not autobiographical, per se, it very much involves alot of your thought at that time.

DSS: Yeah or alot of my process of whatever process that was I was going through that was subconscious. There are things that are said through various characters which are things that I might say or pieces of myself speaking to each other, but alot of it is really subconscious. For this writing experience, whatever was driving me to express something got filtered through this whole story that I was trying to make up. It's like your own private mythology: The story has symbols and things in it which have to do with something outside of the story.

VM: We spoke about this before: In terms of language and style, it's beautifully crafted, beautifully written. Was it difficult to write?

DSS: No. No, it wasn't. It wasn't difficult in the sense that I didn't sweat out every word and that kind of thing....

VM: Well, I mean how did you come up with the forms? There were some parts where you used reverse parenthesis and then there was a play...?

DSS: (laughs) You know I really don't know where that came from exactly. Like I said in the beginning, I think it had relationship to the theme of how you build self in a context where you are standing amongst different places. But, I'm not really sure where that came from except maybe from the kind of stories that I was reading—I've always been interested in narratives that are kind of complicated and dense and where there are lots of things put together. I think I really wanted to play with all that stuff and for some reason this particular novel came to me in scenes.

VM: Well, wonderfully crafted. You make reference to the very great and phenomenal Toni Morrison, one of the people you admire most?

DSS: Yeah, definitely. She's probably the person I admire most, not that I think there's much relationship between her writing and mine. But I admire her work because I think it's amazingly beautiful, but also because I think it's so full of wisdom. She's definitely my favorite—I know I've read all of her books more than once.

VM: Recently we've heard of the struggles of E. Lynn Harris and James Earl Hardy in bringing their works to the market place. Did you have similar experiences?

CONTINUED ON PAGE 42

DSS: I don't actually know about James Earl Hardy's experiences, but I do know about E. Lynn Harris' because I read about them before and I actually got to meet him. My experience wasn't similar to his because he self-published first and did alot of self-promotion because he was running into difficulty getting published. My situation was different—although I don't know how typical or atypical it was because I don't know any other writers—I just wrote the thing and started sending it around to agents and was rejected several times. That was very difficult because I remember thinking, 'I'm not the self-publishing type nor the self-promoting type, so I'm going to be in pretty bad shape if I can't get an agent because I don't even know this industry well.' But, I kept looking for one and just persevered through that [rejection] because I knew that was what happened and that rejection was a part of the whole process. I just kept looking, eventually I heard that Terry MacMillan was teaching a creative writing course at Stanford, so I tried to get in it and she told me my work was too advanced for the class but to come see her. So, I went to see her and I told her that I was in this quandary: I have this manuscript that I would like to get published but I don't have an agent. She gave me the name of a couple of agents, including her own agent. I was not successful with those agents either, however Terry MacMillan's agent liked the novel alot and although she rejected it, she recommended me to another agent who eventually signed me. Within thirty days the manuscript was circulated to twenty publishers and Dutton eventually bought it. I think alot of the initial resistance has to do with publishers not quite understanding what is going on in the Black gay world. For whatever reason, publishers have not recognized the opportunities from the successes of James Earl Hardy and E. Lynn Harris, that there's a market out there interested in this subject—they haven't quite gotten a handle on that.

VM: Right. And I guess that oversight will be an opportunity for us to start capitalizing on our own stuff and start making our own dollars and setting up those types of things that we need in our community.

DSS: Yeah, I think that's true. And I think you may see—although this is not a prediction—a repeat of what happened in the seventies and early eighties with black heterosexual women: They were having the same struggles with bringing themselves to voice and getting publishers to pay attention to them, to take them seriously, to recognize that there was a reading public out there that wanted these books. They were hugely successful—at least a few of them—and their names got catapulted out there in the limelight and from there they helped open doors for others. I think—my hope is—that something similar will be happening with black gay and lesbian writing.

VM: Definitely. Definitely. Definitely. And you're one of the ones helping to open those doors. Let me say thank you, thank you, thank you on behalf of Venus Magazine and our readership for the interview and for your example. I enjoyed speaking with you.

DSS: Thank you, it was a good interview; I enjoyed doing it.

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# Seventh Annual Gay and Lesbian Business Expo

*By Twyla Walling*

There's strength in numbers. That's why there's a Black Gay Pride. That's why there's an AIDS Quilt. And that's why there's Business Expo '95 at the Georgia World Congress Center on October 7 from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m.

"We started out seven years ago to show the gay and lesbian community's economic power and depth," said Expo Chair Jerrilyn Levetan. "Since then, the event has grown every year to include more regional and national companies, and it gets better every year."

The Southeastern Lesbian and Gay Business Expo '95 will include over 150 booths of gay-owned and gay-friendly businesses this year, according to Levetan. "Everybody from florists to mechanics will be there," she said, "including national companies like NationsBank and regional favorites like the Atlanta Business Chronicle."

Presented by the Greater Atlanta Business Coalition (GABC), better known by it's acronym "Gay Buck," Expo '95 is heating up faster than ever. The hottest ticket, according to sales agent Theresa Lowery, seems to be the Retail Marketplace.

"It's an obvious growth step for us," she said, "and it further cements the idea that the gay dollar has power and it should be used whenever possible."

Attendees will not only have a chance to spend some money this year, there's a serious chance to win valuable prizes. "We're going to give away over $10,000 dollars worth of door prizes," said Levetan. "All of our exhibitors are chipping in this year."

In addition to the appearance of black owned business exhibitors, Venus Magazine is a proud sponsor this year.

"Coalition building is what we're all about," said publisher Charlene Cothran. "Both from a people of color standpoint and a gay/lesbian position, Expo gives us a chance to meet thousands of people we might never run across in the normal course of affairs."

As testament to that, Cothran points out that she has recently named Shadow Grafix, Inc., another Expo sponsor, as the designer for Venus Magazine.

"I feel great about our relationship (with Shadow Grafix)," Cothran said. "And this deal is a direct result of Expo—and we haven't even set-up our booth yet!"

"The participation of African-American businesses is crucial to the continued strength of this event," concurred GABC president Patrick Murphy. "Especially here in Atlanta, we can hardly call ourselves a community-wide event without participation from all segments of our community.

"The Expo is all about connecting businesses with the gay and lesbian consumer," he continued. "The power of African-American gay and lesbian consumers is integral to the strength of our community."

The explosive growth of gay-owned and gay-friendly business has strengthened the push for civil rights by bringing issues like domestic partners and insurance coverage into the mainstream of American life. Expo '95 is your chance to show those businesses you appreciate their efforts and reinforce the economic strength of our community.

If you are interested in adding your business to the list of exhibitors, please contact GABC at (404) 377-4258, or, you can register on-line at http://gaypride.com/gabc. However you choose to get involved, act fast. "We will sell out, this year faster than ever," according to Levetan.

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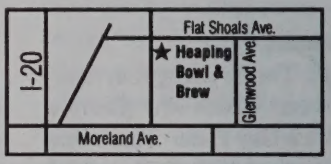


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# Visions of Gay Spirit

## AN EVENING WITH

**Mark Thompson**
Author of *Gay Spirit, Leatherfolk,* and the current *Gay Soul.* Culminated 30 years of work for *The Advocate* as writer, photographer and senior editor with *Long Road To Freedom.*

**Malcolm Boyd**
An Episcopal priest with four decades of activism. Author of *Are You Running With Me Jesus* and an advice column in *Modern Maturity.* At 72 he brings a life rich with years.

**David Sereda**
Canadian singer/songwriter who has perfromed at the Gay Games in New York and Gay Pride in Toronto. Recently released album *the blue guide.*

**Andrew Ramer**
Storyteller, writer, artist and chronologer of Gay pre-history. Author of *Two Flutes Playing* and *Angel Answers,* and co-author of *Ask Your Angels*

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This evening is open to anyone interested in Gay men's culture. It introduces the Gay Spirit Visions Conference to be held in North Carolina, September 21–24. The conference, now in its sixth year, is a gathering of Gay men consciously celebrating and creating our spirituality. For more information or to register, call 292-8567.

# Real Lesbians Don't Do Men

*Inspired by JoJo*

I'm gay".

"But does your man know?"

In the past year I have met more lesbians with a man. Yet, when they enter the clubs, their man becomes invisible.

"Who's that?" I question one women after she brought me home.

"Oh, he's my man," she defended.

"Excuse me, while I pick my weave up from the floor!"

This game seemed oh so familiar. It reminded me of the times when I courted men; they too left out the facts: married with children. Were women now playing the same games with their pussies by failing to mention the invisible family at home?

Girlfriend then tried to convince me that she didn't sleep with her man. "Where does he sleep, in the closet?" I inquired to myself, since I only saw two bedrooms, one of which was occupied by her sons.

"I'm leaving him as soon as my boys grow up," she told me. I looked at her with a raised eyebrow, since her children were in preschool. "Why do you call yourself gay when you are actually bisexual?"

"I am anything but bisexual," she professed. "I love women," she tried to sound convincing, explaining that her man only provided the necessities of home. He paid the rent, her car note, along with the rest of her bills. But he couldn't provide her with the one thing she really needed, which was the fervor of a woman.

"What are you doing on the floor? she asked.

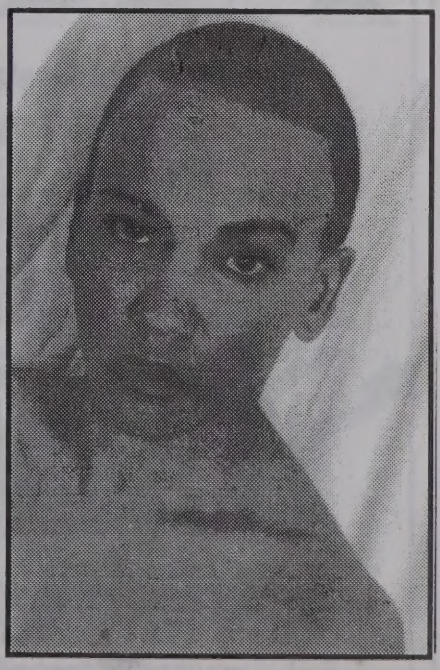
"Girl, I'm searching for my weave, so I can get the hell out of here?" I squealed.

As I drove myself home, I marveled over this woman being a "real lesbian". Why had she chosen to remain undercover, hiding in the closet of life? Was it to protect her family, lifestyle, or career? Did she have the best of both worlds? How much did her man actually know about her dangerous liaisons with women? I was clueless.

"Real lesbians don't do men" kept swirling in my head. I was now beginning to question the true meaning of being gay. I thought you were bisexual if you could have a relationship with both men and women.

A lesbian with a man... now, that's gonna take some getting used to. When women meet, the common question that is often asked is, "Do you have a lover?" Should we now inquire if there is an invisible man hidden at home?

As I drove the car into the driveway, I now know what my mama meant when she said, "You can't judge a book by its cover." Just 'cause it reads lesbian, don't mean it's all about women!



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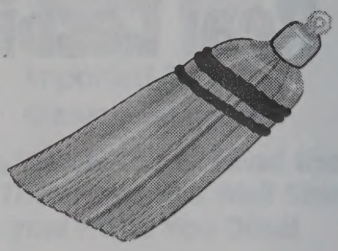

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**WWW:** http://www.gaypride.com/gabc

The Southeastern Lesbian and Gay Business Expo is Presented by the Greater Atlanta Business Coalition (GABC), a non-profit organization dedicated to the development and growth of businesses that support the lesbian and gay community.

# Southeastern Lesbian and Gay Business Expo '95

**Georgia World Congress Center • Atlanta, GA • Saturday, October 7, 1995 • 10 a.m. —4 p.m.**

# Black Gay Pride Atlanta 1995 Schedule

**Friday, September 1** —1st Annual African-American AIDS Memorial and Candlelight Vigil. 7pm - 10pm, Free. Water Works Park. Enjoy live gospel music and community speakers. From downtown, take 75/85 north to 14th Street Exit, turn left, go to Northside Drive, make a right, go under passway, then left at Bishop Street and right on Resevoir Drive into WaterWorks Park!! 10 minutes!

**Saturday, September 2**—Soul to Soul Brunch, 10:30am - 2:30pm, $3.00 donation, excellent menu items. Mix and mingle, enjoy live jazz with Barry Bruce & Co. and an open mic poetry slam. Kalo's Coffee House, 1248 Clairmont Rd., Decatur.

**Saturday, September 2**—The Official Black Gay Pride Party kicks off at the Radisson Hotel, downtown at Courtland and International Blvd. Professional models work our runway during a New York House Music Dance. $7.00. Doors open at 10:30pm. Co-sponsored by Venus, M-Press Modeling Agency and Physikos at Ansley.

**Saturday, September 2**—ACT UP/Atlanta sponsors a "Georgia Ride for a Cure" from Atlanta to Savannah (end date: Sept. 7, 1995) benefitting AIDS Education Services for Minorities, AIDS Legal Project, AIDS Support, Atlanta Lesbian AIDS Project, Brothers Back to Back, Our Common Welfare, Prevention Point, Project Azuka, Inc., Sisterlove, Inc. and WISE.. Contact ACT UP/Atlanta at 404/874-6782. Pledges, Volunteers and Materials are needed.

**Sunday, September 3**—Prism presents Buckhead Beach Party '3', 5pm - 1am, Buckhead Towne Club. 2900 Pharr Dr. $10. Swimsuit Contest, Hourly Raffle. Call 344-6865 for details.

**Sunday, September 3**—Safe, Sexy, and Proud Skating Party. 11pm - 3am. Golden Glide 2750 Wesley Chapel Rd. $8 includes skate rental. Sponsored by the Men of Second Sunday benefiting African American Gay Outreach/AID Atlanta. Sisters Welcome!

**Monday September 4**—Hotlanta's First Close-Out Male & Female Picnic in Chastain Park (Master Grill Lot) 10 AM until Sunset. Starter Food & Beverages are Available at the Main Table. Volleball, Softball, Horse Shoes and Tennis Courts will be provided. Bring your Blankets, Lawn Chairs and Music! Presented by Shadow Production Co.

**Monday September 4**—First Annual Monday Madness Affair at Revolution. 293 Pharr Road, Buckhead. Doors open at 10 PM. Over $500 in Cash and Prizes, 10,000 Square Feet with Live Entertainment and Two Dynamic DJ's. Advance Tickets: $8, Door Tickets: $10. A portion of proceeds will benefir African American AIDS Organization.

# Clip and Save Pocket Schedule

## Atlanta.

**Wednesday, August 30 and Thursday, August 31**—AESM present's their First NiteClub Outreach/Donation Blitz! Help raise AIDS awareness in Atlanta's Gay and Lesbian Community while campaigning for AESM. Volunteers meet at the Otherside on Wednesday from 11 PM to 1 AM and the Pearl Garden on Thursday from 9:30 PM until midnight. Call Mark at 404/753-2900 for more details.

**Thursday, August 31**—MY SOUL IS A WITNESS—Dr. Gloria Wade-Gayles returns to read from her anthology MY SOUL IS A WITNESS: AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY. She offers for the first time a beautiful glimpse into the Spirit that is at the heart of African American women's lives. Gloria's earlier boo, PUSHED BACK TO STRENGTH: A BLACK WOMAN'S JOURNEY HOME received national acclaim for its honest, moving portrayal of the author's spiritual journey. We are pleased, as always, to honor Gloria Wade-Gayles and her work.

**Thursday, September 7**—A Lady and A Woman opens at Emory University's Canon Chapel. 8:00 PM. $5, free to all students with I.D. Call 727-0270 for group reservations. Take N. Decatur Rd. to Oxford, into Emory Campus. The second major building is White Hall. Cannon Chapel is behind White Hall and has a cross on top of the building. Shows conintue Saturday the ninth at 8 PM and Sunday the tenth at 2:30 PM. The Closing Reception is at 4 PM in the Candler Library, Rm 201-B; sponsored by the Emory University Dept of African American Studies.

**Saturday, September 9**—Youth conference on sexual orientation: a one-day conference bringing together sexually diverse young folks, our friends, families, mentors, and peers to share our life experiences and to talk about challenges fac ing Atlanta's youth as well as discuss survival skills, support available, and what is needed to foster healthy living. Please join us. For more info, call Steve or Wendi at (404) 908-5368.

## Boston.

**Saturday, September 9**—Third Annual Love Overboard Boat Cruise III aboard the largest twin-hulled catamaran in the New England area, the M/V Freedom. Sponsored by MOCAA. Live entertainment and a Caribbean buffet with a cash bar. Donartions are $10.00 per person. For info, call (617) 267-7766, ext. 572.

## New York.

**Saturday, September 2** - "Women of the '90's" presents "Our Family Reunion" (Bonnie and Clyde Reunion). Contact Bess Knowing (718) 992-9073 for more info.

**Saturday, September 9** - X-Cenrics presents "an End of Summer Jam" at the South Oxford Club located at 187 South Oxford St. in Brooklyn from 11pm - 5am, tickets $30.00 in advance open bar. Featuring special guest appearances. Music by GHP. For more information & tickets contact: MD Murphy (917) 278-1649, Jackie Brantley (914) 972-3205, or Bess (718) 992-9073. Tickets go on sale July 1995!

**Monday, September 1** - Saturday 16 - NJEMA announces "The Cruise of Distinction 1995!" Tour a total of five fabulous islands!! Free rum swizzles, happy ho;ur, island bar-b-que, live reggae and calypso music for 5 fabulous days aboard a Caribbean Cruise. Join us aboard the yacht "Flying Cloud." For ticket information contact Bess Knowings at (718) 992-9073.

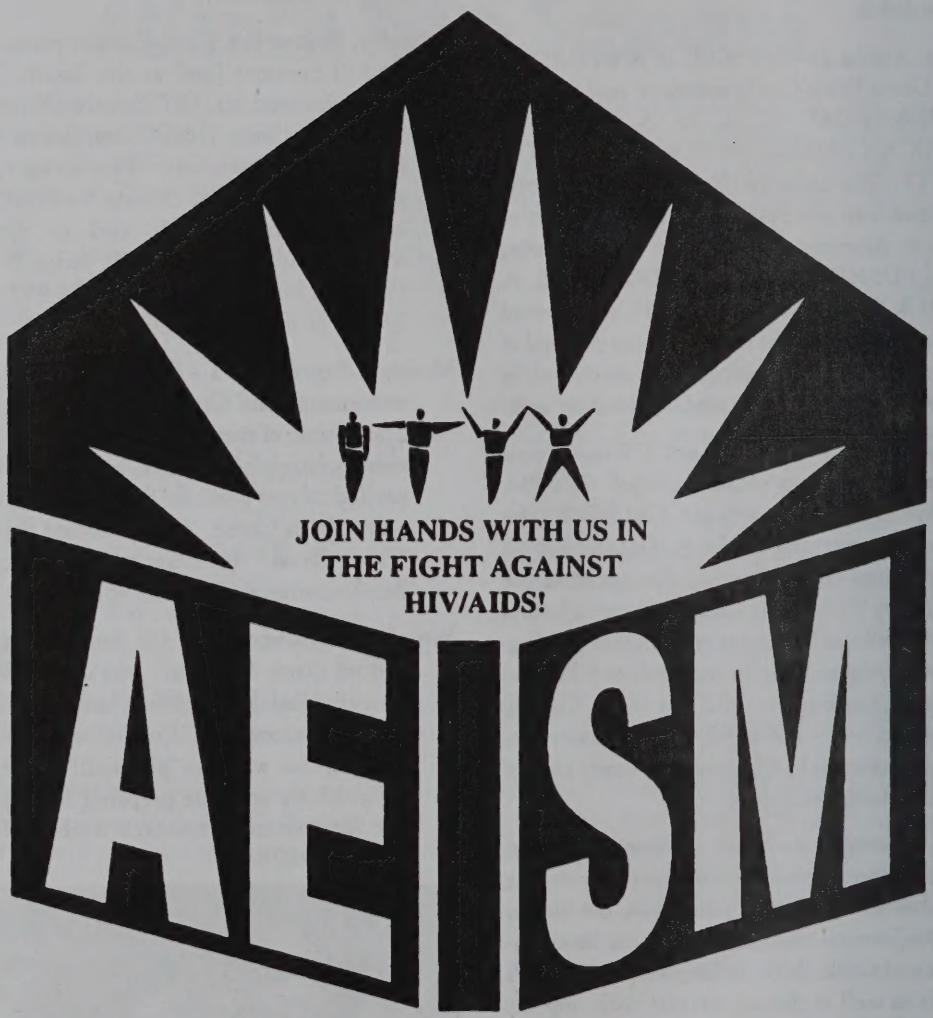
**Saturday, September 16** - 4th Annual Oldtimers Softball Game & Picnic. Join us at FDR Park for a fun-filled day of softball, basketball, volleyball, and relaxation!! Dust off those bats and gloves if you want to "play ball!" Free grills are available so come prepared to barbeque! For further info, contact Barbara Rooks (718) 379-4075.

PHOTO BY: CHARLES EASLEY

*Venus publisher, Charlene Cothran, and Chicago's Gwen Austin greet guests at a recent Venus fundraiser.*

# You've Seen Us, We've Seen You...
# Now Let's See You Make a Difference!

***In Georgia there were over 6,000 reported cases of AIDS in the African-American Community, 67% of which are Homosexual/Bi-Sexual Men.***




**Our primary focus is black, gay men. We provide support through housing assistance, bar/club outreach, support groups, and financial assistance.**

## "We Love You, Love Yourself... BE SAFE!"

If you would like to volunteer, need information, or would like to make a tax deductible contribution, please contact:

**AIDS Education/Services for Minorities**
P.O. Box 87277, Atlanta, Georgia 30337
PH: 404/753-2900 • FX: 404/752-9610

# Karat's Night Club Opening This Fall

Johnnie Culbreath and Michael Holt, Midtown Atlanta residents, plan to open a rhythm and blues nightclub early in October to be located at 511 Peachtree Street, just a few blocks from the heart of downtown.

The club, according to the newly declared entrepreneurs, will feature live music several nights a week and will strive to serve a Gay African-American audience that, to date, has been under-served in this city. "Selecting music by popular African-American artists, both oldies and contemporary hits, will further characterize the bar as a comfortable, nostalgic, and diverse establishment," according to the owners.

Both Holt and Culbreath believe Atlanta is ready for an "upscale" club that dedicates itself to an audience of Lesbian and Gay African-Americans. Culbreath, a Gay African-American states, "in my own pursuit for entertainment and certainly in the pursuit of my friends, there is a strong desire for a sophisticated, but fun place to go where you can actually talk over the music level and meet people like yourself."

Holt reiterates that "we want to ensure a diverse patronage, but we are even more committed to establishing Karats as not just a business in the Black Lesbian and Gay community, but a resource as well."

Planning a full-service bar, Culbreath and Holt have arranged to feature a New Orleans talent, Mary Griffin, on vocals and Jack Fowler on key board piano. The two will perform on Saturdays and other live music will be presented on Thursdays and Fridays. Presently, the owners are auditioning for other entertainers whose style fits with the jazz or rhythm and blues flavor of the nightclub. Interested artists may write and send bios, arrangements and other information to: Karats, P.O. Box 55554, Atlanta, Georgia 30308. More information regarding Karats will be featured in the October issue of Venus.

CAT TOO!
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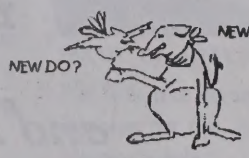


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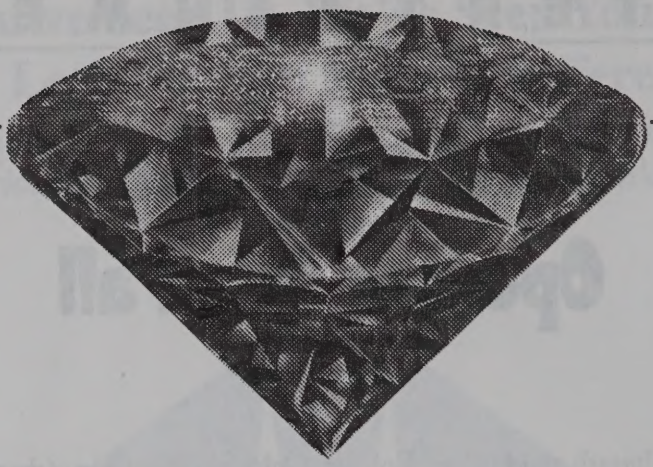


# Karats Night Club

*Rhythm and Blues*

*Live Music*

*and much more . . . !*

Coming to 511 Peachtree Street
This October!

Watch for More Details!

# Southern Town Hall Meeting

*by Charlene Cothran*

Phil Wilson, co-founder of the National Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum met with over 30 Atlanta leaders at the Venus office during the first of a series of town hall meetings planned across the country.

Wilson opened by quoting a mentor, "A people not willing to step to the plate will not be taken seriously."

The meeting focused on discussing the need for autonomous Black, Lesbian and Gay organizations. Rev. Herbert Evans visiting from Philadelphia, quickly pointed to the autonomous National Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum.

The NBGLLF is based in Los Angeles and is planning it's 9th Annual Conference in Dallas, February 1996. The NGBLLF exist to give technical assistance to other black gay and lesbian organizations, to provide a national voice and has a mailing list of over 10,000.

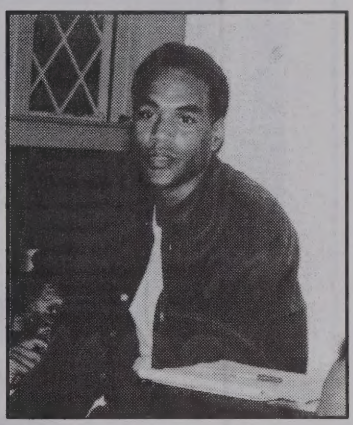


PHOTO BY: JENA P. JONES

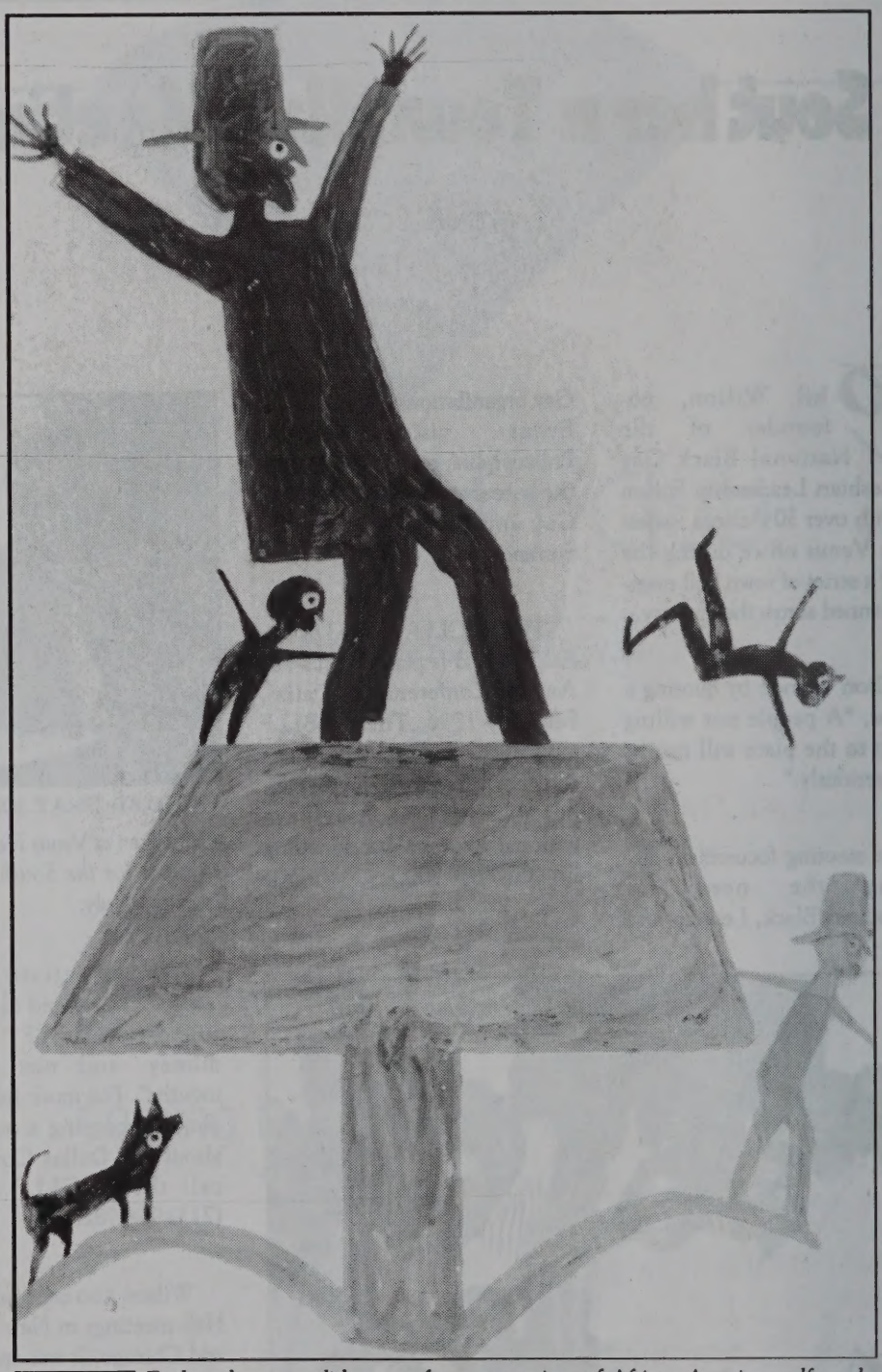
*Phil Wilson at Venus Headquarters, in town for the Southern Town Meeting in July.*

PHOTO BY: JENA P. JONES

*Participants at the Southern Town Hall Meeting with Phil Wilson at the Venus Headquarters in July.*

Atlanta activist Duncan Teague encouraged the group to support NGBLLF "with our money, and not just our mouths". For more information about becoming a member or about the Dallas Conference, call the NBGLLF office at (213) 964-7820.

Wilson also scheduled Town Hall meetings in New York city and Chicago. It was an honor to have our American hero here in Atlanta. Phil, thanks for all you do!



**HIGH** *Explore the accomplishments of two generations of African-American self-taught artists in the exhibition "Dust Tracks on a Road: Four Southern Artists," on view at the High Museum of Art Folk Art and Photography Galleries from August 8 through November 4, 1995. This untitled drawing by Bill Traylor is one of the featured works in this exhibition that brings together four of the most significant self-taught artists from the southern United States. For more information, call (404) 577-6940.*

Michael

Cummings

Carolyn

Mazloomi

**Camille Love Galley presents African American Quiltmakers and the National Black Arts Festival's "Our Story" exhibit through September 15 (404)841-0446. 309 E. Paces Ferry Road Buckhead.**

## Hammonds House Galleries

**Hammonds House introduces 75 year old, self taught artist Sandy Hall in "Front and Center" , with an opening reception Sunday Sept. 17 at 2:00pm. The Exhibit runs thru Nov. 19. Hammonds House Galleries is located at 503 Peoples St. SW, (404)752-8730.**

## "Before Freedom Came: African-American Life in the Antebellum South"

**"Before Freedom Came" depicts the lifes of everyday African-American men and women in the south before the Civil War. This amazing exhibit runs August 19–October 15 at the Atlanta History Museum.**

# Atlanta Feminist Women's Chorus

**Invites you to our 1995-96 Concert Season:**

*Saturday, December 2, 1995* — *Georgia Tech Theater for the Arts*

*Saturday, March 16, 1996* — *performing with a guest artist, TBA*

*Saturday, June 22, 1996* — *performing with a guest artist, TBA*

**Love to Sing? Rehearsals begin Sept. 10. No audition required.**
**For more information call AFWC at 438-5823**

*Robert Glor, Interim Director*
*Chantel Wright, Assistant Director*

FULTON COUNTY ARTS COUNCIL

CITY OF ATLANTA

The AFWC is supported in part by the Fulton County Commission under the guidance of the Fulton County Arts Council, the Georgia Council for the Arts through appropriations of the General Assembly, and the City of Atlanta Bureau of Cultural Affairs.

# BUCKHEAD BEACH PARTY '95

**LABOR DAY WEEKEND**

*SUNDAY..SEPTEMBER 3, 1995*

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# ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Redefined Faith Unity Fellowship Atlanta** will hold Revival August 24–27, nightly at 7 PM. The Sunday service will be at 2:30 PM. Other Unity Pastors plan to attend for the installation of Rev. S.F. Ma-Hee, including: Elder Zachary Jones (Unity New York), Rev. Mays (Unity Philadelphia), and members from the movement at large pastored by founder, Bishop Carl Bean. For more information, call (404) 388-4624.

PHOTO BY: RON SINGLETON

*Rainey Cheeks, Bishop, Elder Zachary Jones, Rev. Jacqueline Holland.*

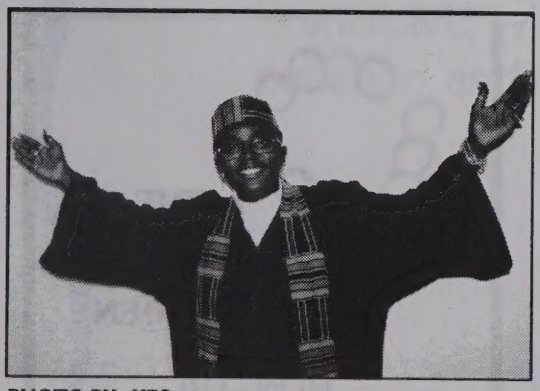

PHOTO BY: KES

*Reverend S.F. Ma-Hee will be installed during revival week as Pastor of Atlanta's Unity Fellowship Church.*

**The Gay and Lesbian African-Americans (G.A.L.A.)** would like to thank the Sacramento Community, The Mirage, Lambda Community Center, Andante Marketing and the volunteers for your donations and contributions to a successful Afrocentric Weekend Celebration (July 21-23, 1995). The event's success included a twenty eight meal donations to one of Sacramento's local homeless shelters. Our organization looks forward to seeing you at our next event.

**Sunday, September 10, 17, and 24, 4 PM**—The Atlanta Feminist Women's Chorus welcomes new and returning members to its 1995-96 season. New members may join without an audition by attending rehearsals on these dates at the First Existentialist Congregation, 470 Candler Park Dr. W who would like to be part of AFWC, but do not like to sing, are encouraged to join the AFWC Auxiliary. For more information, please call 438-5823, or write to: AFWC, P.O. Box 8480, Atl, GA 30306

**James Earl Hardy,** author of the best-seller B-Boy Blues presents his latest work, **SPIKE LEE A Biography** (from Chelsea house). Copies of this exciting examination of one of america's premiere black film makers are available from the author himself! To order yours send a check or money order to: James Earl Hardy, 485 First Avenue, Suite 16E, NY, NY 10016 $22.00 (18.95 per hardback plus postage) or $10.00 (7.95 per paperback plus postage)

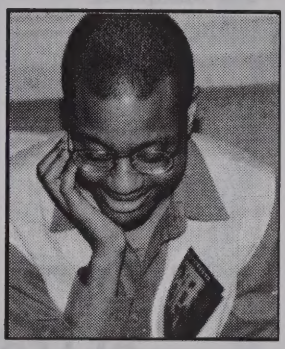

PHOTO BY: RON SINGLETON

*James Early Hardy*

**The Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus** is looking for male singing members for all voice parts for their 1995-96 Fifteenth Anniversary Season. For information on auditions and rehearsal please call 698-8138 to schedule audition.

# NIGHTLIFE

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| WAREHOUSE (TRAXX) | 306 Luckie St. 404/577-9510 | Saturday | Men . . . . . 80% Women . . . 20% | House |
| Waterworks Cafe | 111 Luckie St. 404/577-7059 | Sun & Fri. | Men . . . . . 70% Women . . . 30% | R&B, Show House |
| Pearl Garden | 111 Luckie St. 404/524-0036 | Thursday | Men . . . . . 95% Women . . . . 5% | R&B, Show |
| The Marquette Lounge | M.L. King Jr. Dr. 404/526-7677 | Saturday | Men . . . . . 50% Women . . . 50% | Top 40, R&B, Show |
| LORETTA'S | 708 Spring St. 404/874-8125 | Fri, Sat. | Men . . . . . 60% Women . . . 40% | House |


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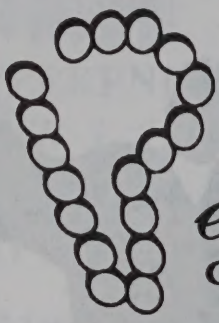


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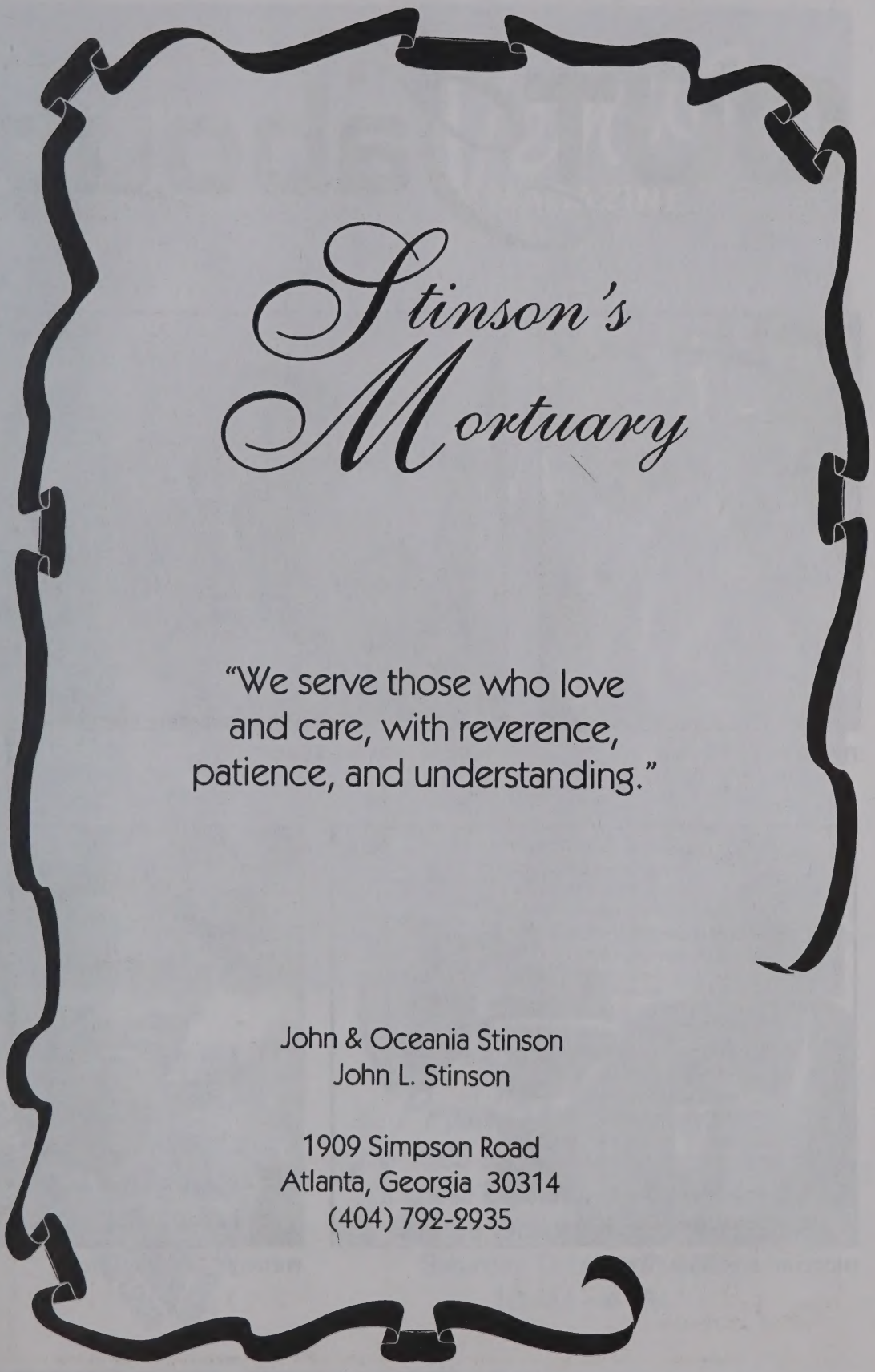
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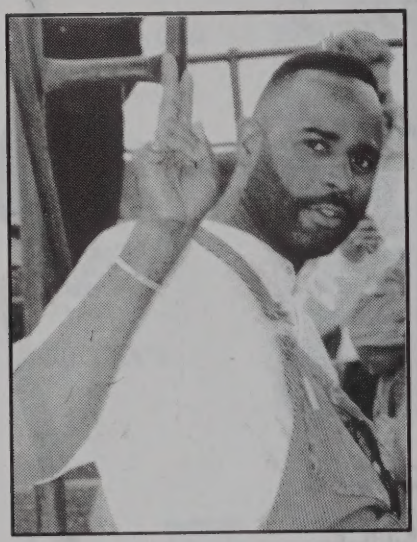
# OUT & about



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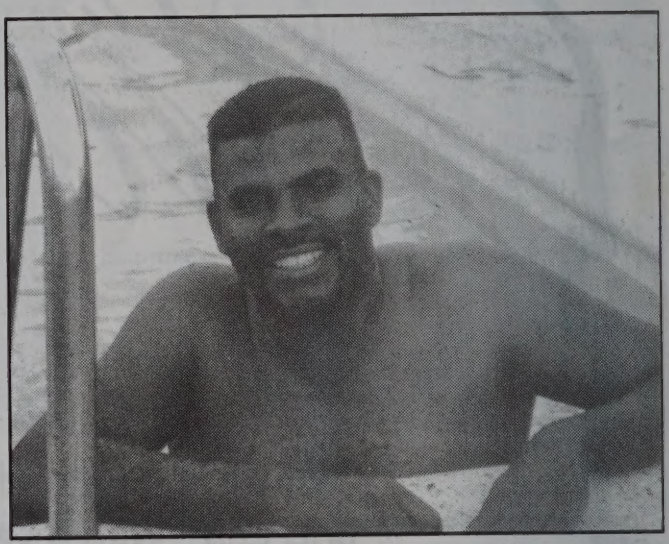

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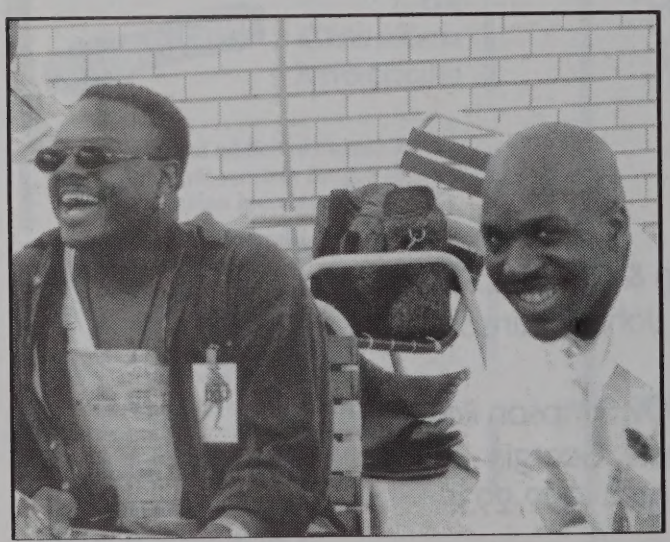

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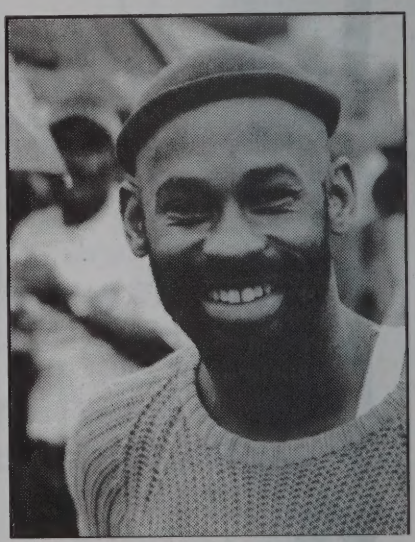

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**Abundant Grace Community Church**—743 Virginia Ave., Sunday worship–7:30 PM. (404) 815-0036.

**African Ancestral Lesbian United for Societal Changed (Formerly Salsa Soul)**—(212) 620-7310. Candice.

**African American Lesbian Gay Alliance (AALGA)**—(404) 908-7371.

**AIDS Education Services for Minorities (AESM)**—P.O. Box 87277, Atlanta, GA 30337. (404) 753-2900 or (404) 743-7733.

**AIDS Response Knoxville**—Suite 411, 109 Northshore Drive, Knoxville, TN 37919, (615) 450-2437.

**All Saints Metropolitan Community Church**—575 Boulevard. Sunday, 7 PM, evenings, 8:30 PM, (404) 622-1154.

**Atlanta Lambda Center, Inc.**—P.O. Box 15180, Atlanta, Georgia 30333. (404) 662-9010.

**Black Lesbian and Gay Pride, Inc. (BLGP Inc.)**—Box 7184, Washington, DC. 20024.

**Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum**—1219 S. LaBrea Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90019. (213) 964-7820. FAX (213) 964-7830.

**Black and White Men Together**—P.O. Box 1334, Atlanta, GA 30301-1334. (404) 892-BWMT.

**Black Lesbians With Children**—(404) 498-3815.

**Black Women's Xchange (BWX)**—Meets every Friday at 8 PM at the Amassi Center. 3419 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Oakland, CA. For more info, call Ms. Clydis (510) 649-0536.

**Boyz of Distinction**—P.O. Box 78091, Atl., GA 30532.

**Brothers Back-2-Back, Inc.**—An African American HIV/AIDS Organization, P.O. Box 11366, Atlanta, GA 30310. Voice: (404) 593-5805.

**Dyfferent Gyrl Production**—P.O. Box 13346, Atlanta, GA 30324. (404) 908-5340.

**Greater Atlanta Business Coalition (GABC or Gay Buck)**—2103 N. Decatur Rd., Suite 190, Decatur, GA 30033. PH: (404) 377-4258 FX: (404) 377-8500. EM: info@gabc.gaypride.com

**Gay and Out Productions**—P.O. Box 111, Clarkston, GA 30021-0111. (404) 299-7809 FX: (404) 508-8697.

**Gay Black Female (GBF)**—6312 Hollywood Blvd., Suite 114, Hollywood, CA 90028. (310) 288-6315.

**The Gay and Lesbian Center**—208 W. 13th St., New York, New York 10011.

**Gay/Lesbian Latino/a Comm. Organization. Out Reach, Inc.**—(404) 346-3922 or (800) 441-2437.

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**Lambda Car Club/Dogwood Region**—(404) 901-9447, P.O. Box 11705, Atlanta, GA 30355.

**Las Buenas Amigas**—(212) 868-7816. Carmen, The Gay & Lesbian Center, 208 W. 13th St., NY, NY 10011.

**Latinos En Accion**—Youth support group. P.O. Box 15388, Atlanta, GA 30325. (404) 621-5743. Yolanda Leeky, (404) 753-2840.

**Lesbians Latinos en Nuestro Ambiente**—(707) 292-7705.

**LLEGO, National Latino/a Lesbian & Gay Organization**—P.O. Box 44483, Wash., DC. 20026.

**MOCAA (Men of Color Against AIDS)**—Boston, MA. (617) 442-3800

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**Spelman College Lesbian Bi-Sexual Alliance**—710 Peachtree St., Suite 126, Atlanta, GA 30308. (404) 908-5368.

**TRIKONE**—An Asian gay and lesbian organization. trikatl@mindspring.com

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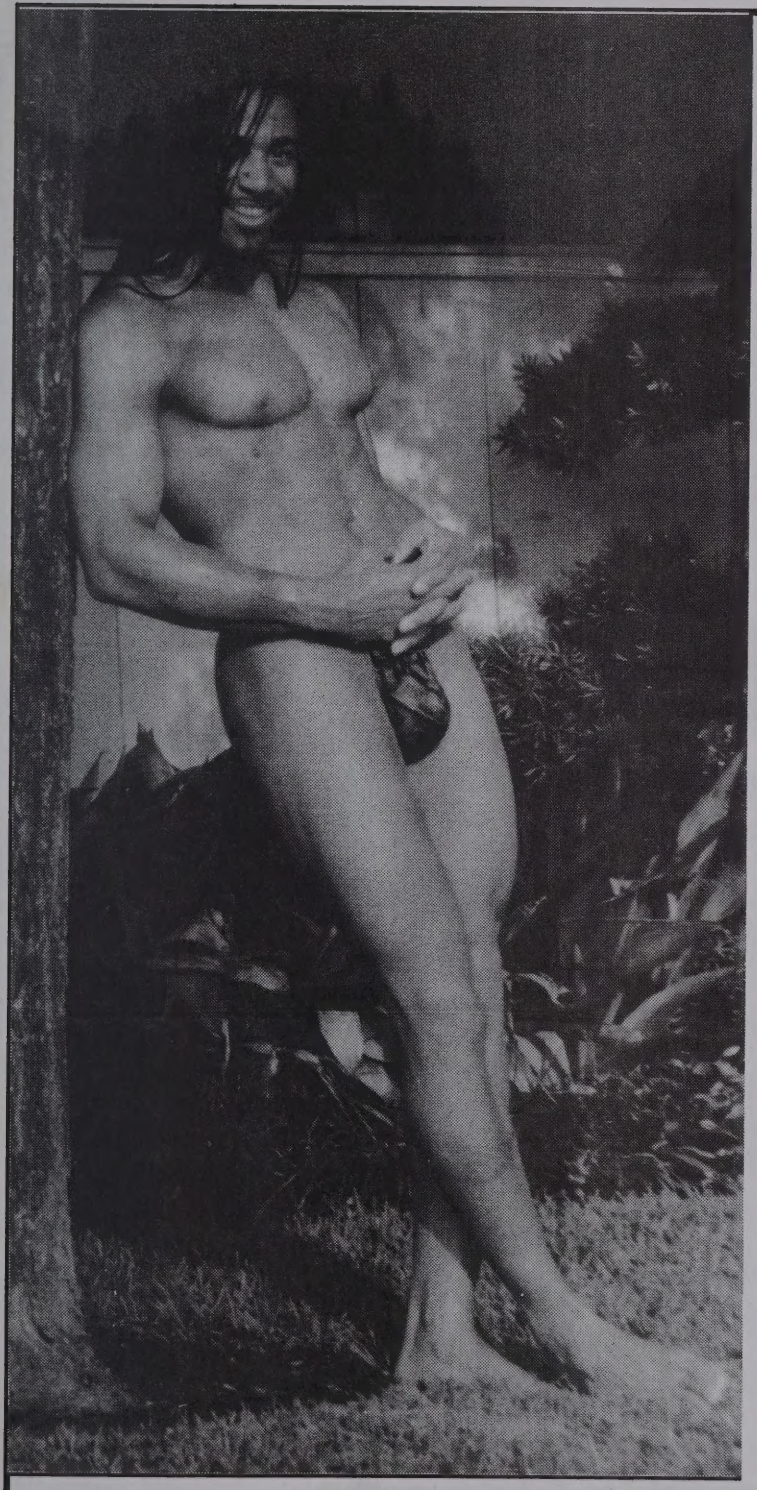

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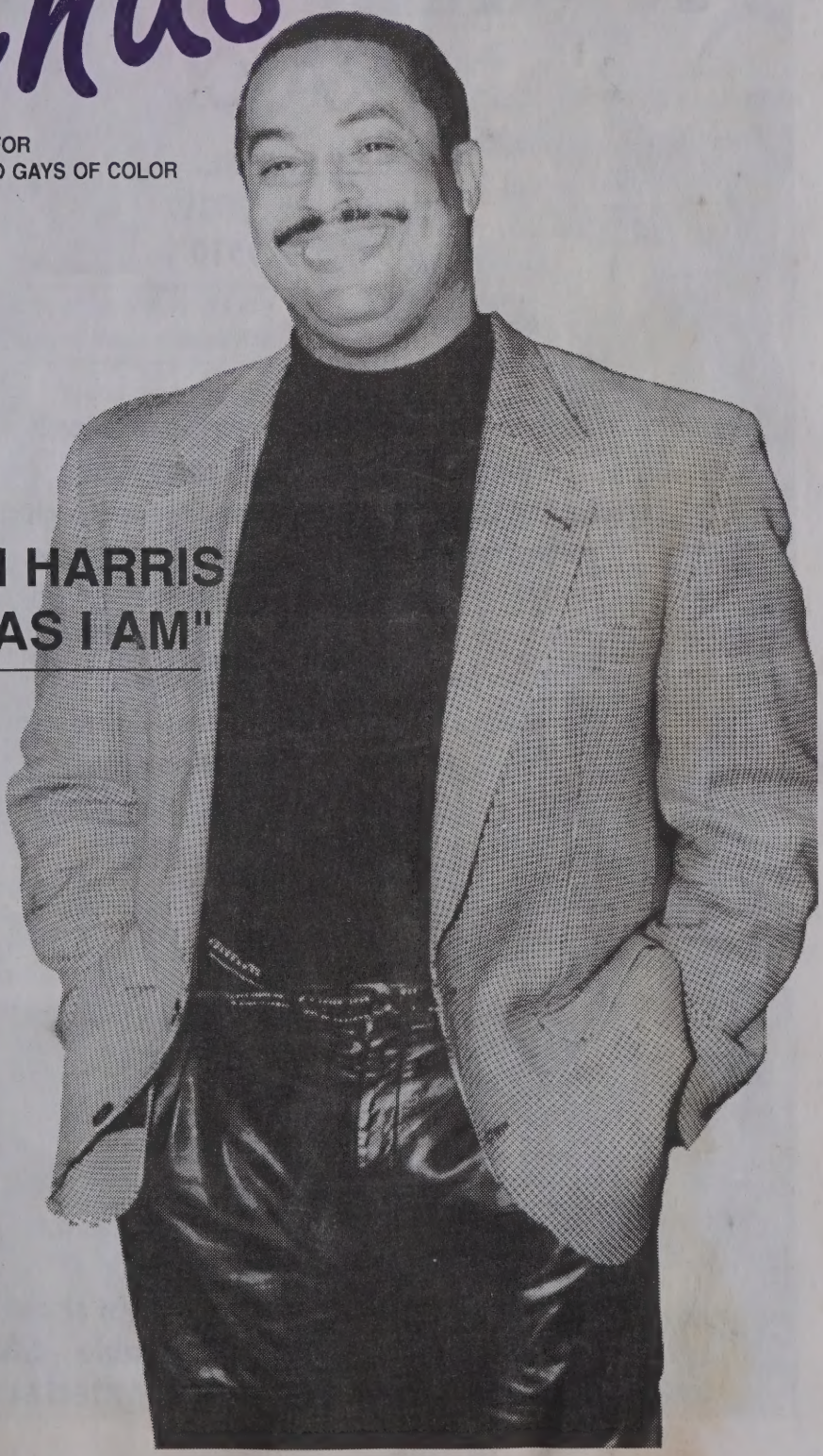

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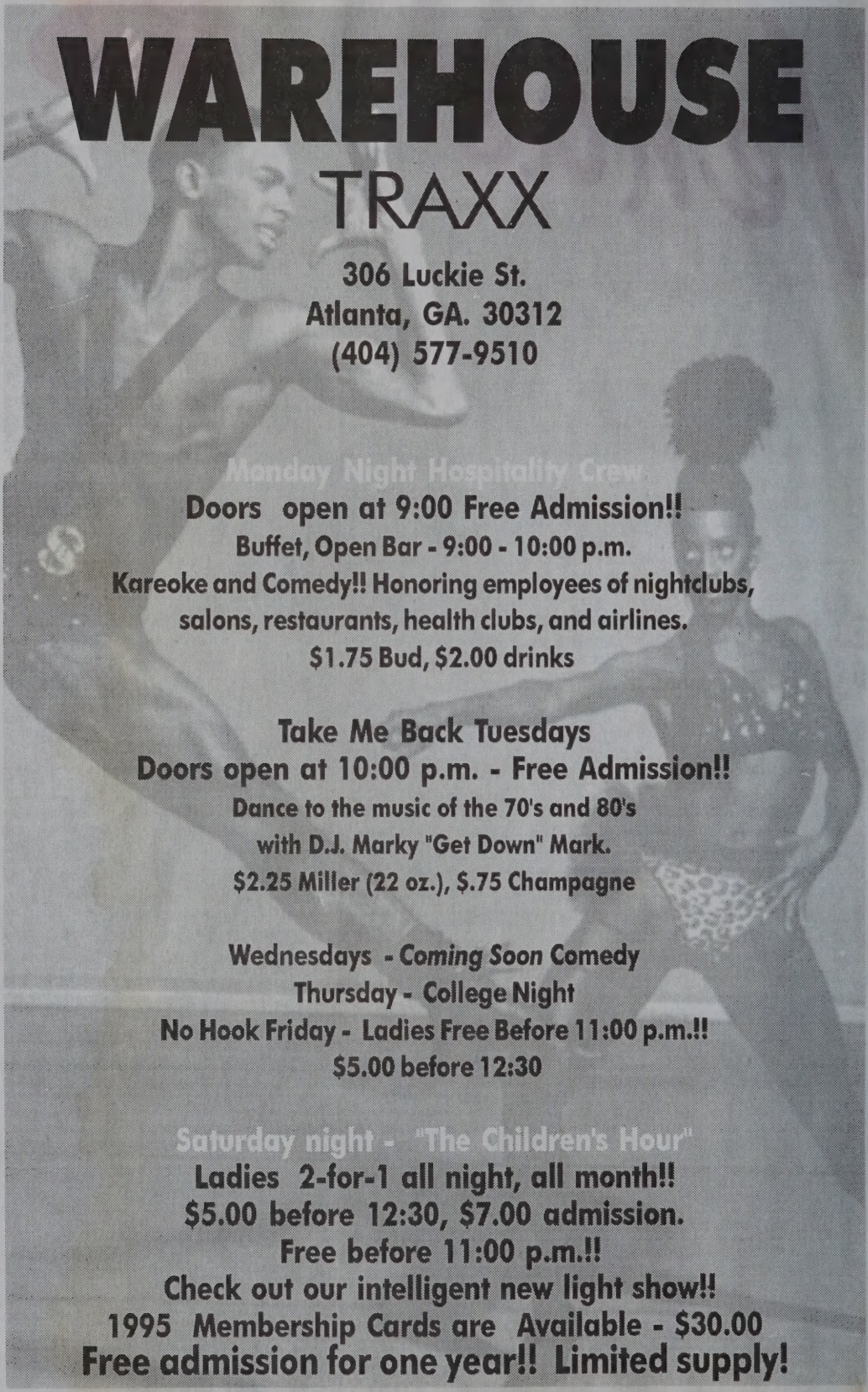

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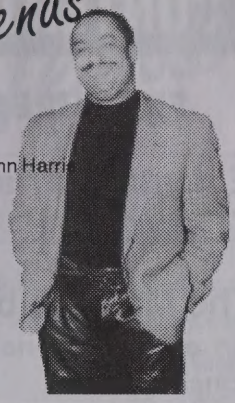


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# EDITOR'S NOTES

Timing is everything!

To be black, lesbian, gay, drag, spiritual, intelligent, successful, independent, and full of talent is to be YOU. To be you and HAVE a true voice in this community is to be AWESOME. For every awesome black gay organization to come together, well that's POWER.

It's that time.

Editor in Chief
Charlene Cothran

*Come together Children*

# LETTERS

*Dear Editor,*

*Thank you so much for publishing a magazine of substance and quality. You are right on time and target with your publication. As a college professor, I am proud to write to you and say that your magazine is very inspirational, touching and informative.*

*I pride myself on being one of your subscribers and again, congratulations for "Coming of Age".*

*Victoria Onasis*

---

*Greetings,*

*Just prior to her death, my life touched briefly and tangentially the life of Venus Landin. We worked together at Oxford Books, and I ran across her again at Sevanada.*

*Even though I am a white, heterosexual male, Venus was always friendly to, and interested in, me, as a person. She was not just acting nice. She was for real, and I knew it. I liked her very, very much. We used to share ribald commentary and laugh together.*

*Because she was a humble unpretentious person, and did not pack an attitude, there were many things I didn't know about her while she lived. To me, she was just a genuinely good person without prejudice, whom I liked and enjoyed.*

*Phillipe D'Angelo Van de Graff*

# CONTENTS

## FEATURES


**21** **E. Lynn Harris**
*Confrontation with Self*

**9** **The Male Club**
*An excerpt by novelist Doug Jones*

**12** **Cotsville Stories**
*Saints and 'Aints*

**7** **Spirituality**
*Confidence and a made-up mind*

**17** **Food**
*Healthy meals by Lois A. Grant*

**18** **Health**
*Ten ways to stay on a diet*

**32** **Education**
*SisterLove*

**28** **Business**
*How to prepare for your tax consultant*


## DEPARTMENTS


**10** **What's going on in Your Life?**
**3** **Editor's Note**
**34** **Events**
**35** **Community Calendar**

# Venus™

March 1995
Vol. 1 No. 3

| | |
|---|---|
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| **Photographers** | Michael Marshall |
| | Jena Jones |

**On The Cover:** E. Lynn Harris
Photo By:Gena Jones

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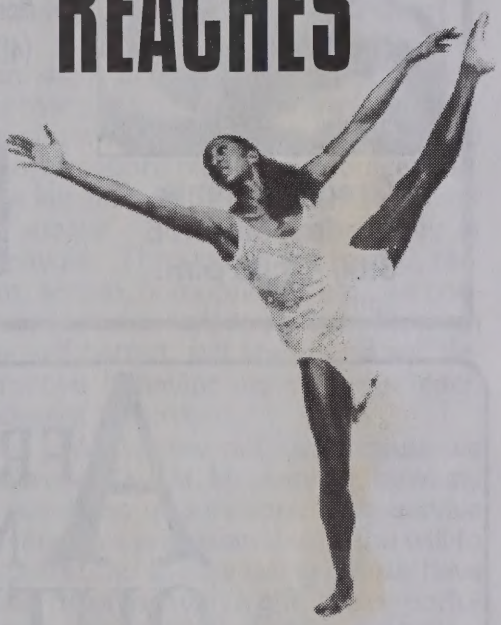

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# SPIRITUALITY

## CONFIDENCE AND A MADE UP MIND

by Kamau Ifoma

*A history of oppression, denial, injustice and abuse has been the greatest detriment to people of color. We have listened so long to what we cannot do that we have very little confidence in what we can do. It is this lack of confidence, not racism, hatred, lack of education or social injustice that creates the greatest deterrent to our progress. One of the best kept secrets in life is when children of God make up their minds, when they bring their minds into harmony with the desire in their hearts, when they pray for and follow intuitive guidance; then no one and nothing can stop them - no matter what color they may be. Confidence and a made up mind are the stuff Kings and Queens are made of.*

*"Acts of Faith"*
*by Iyanla Vanzant*

Confidence and a made up mind are instruments of unconditional love. They are the tools used by an individual who knows who and whose he/she is. Individuals who have found, through much growth and development, perfect peace within themselves. They are not concerned about how others perceive them. Their confidence comes from the awareness that THEIR LIFE is a divine, unique and unrepeatable creation. Out of this confidence comes the made-up mind to live every moment as though it is created just for them.

I understand how this concept can seem impossible and improbable for many of you. We are part of a community who has survived a long history of oppression, bigotry and outcasting. The key term in the previous statement is "survive". We are a community of survivors. Through all the hatred, racism, sexism, homophobia, etc., we continue each moment to survive. Through the self hatred, self abuse and self destructive behavior we continue each moment to survive.

We survive not just because we have been taught, by example, by many generations of survivors. We survive because we are created with the will to express Life. In expressing Life we have been provided with a gift, the opportunity to choose, define and perceive exactly what life is. The gift is an opportunity that we take for granted. We consistently allow others to label and define us. In doing so we actually give to others the power to create us. By claiming for ourselves who and whose we are then we become the creators of our world. We are no longer bound by the labels of those who wish to control and imprison us. We are now free to BE exactly what we are created to BE.

Through this process of learning to define our own existence we must reclaim the power which we have given away. Most often we give our power away very innocently, generally out of

loyalty, to those who genuinely love and respect us. They can be our families, churches, friends, employers. They request that we live by their rules because they think they know what is best for us. They are generally sincere in their concern for us. BUT because they don't walk in our shoes, nor we in their's, they can only guess at what is best for us as we can only guess at what is best for them. They were not put in our lives to interpret how life "should" be expressed through us.

No one can do this better for us than us. Your parents can only teach from their experience. Your church or religious affiliation can only provide you with a teaching as they understand it. Your friends can only be an example for you through their own choices. It is by your power, confidence and a made-up mind that your life finds its meaning. YOU are the interpreter of your world.

Always remember that we are Spiritual Beings first! As you use your creative power to define and create, why not create a world where you are special and divine. A world where you always come first. A world where no one determines who you are. Create a world where your love for yourself overrides all the "isms" which have, up to this time, held you in bondage. Create the world which Your Creator intended just for you. And since Your Creator said is OK for you to be black, male or female or transperson, gay or lesbian or bisexual then it makes no sense for you to allow someone else to overrule Your Creator. Through confidence and a made-up mind allow yourself to express just as Your Creator intended for only you to express. "I AM A SPIRITUAL BEING, CREATING THE WORLD IN WHICH MY CREATOR INTENDED JUST FOR ME. IT IS A WORLD OF PEACE, HAPPINESS AND ABOVE ALL UNCONDITIONAL LOVE. WELCOME TO MY WORLD!"

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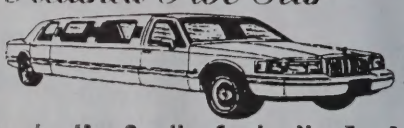
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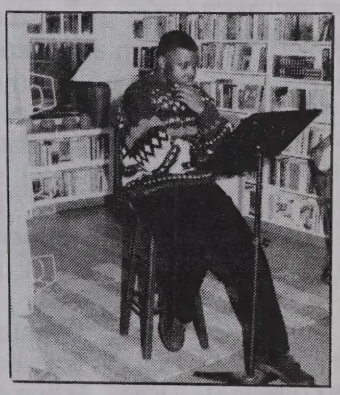
# THE MALE CLUB: *An Indoctrination*

*An excerpt from the forthcoming novel*
***by Douglas E. Jones***

When I was young I used to dream in vivid technicolor, unwittingly, foolishly enamored of hamsters, dinosaurs, and anything that flew. I used to dream little black boy dreams of skinned knees and skateboards, dream dreams of bottle-top scaly on tar-topped streets and stoop ball on the front steps of brownstones. I would dream of little black girls in corn rows and pigtails, double-dutching and hop-scotching their way through glass-littered Brooklyn streets. Back then life was summertime, even in the winter, and, had anyone tried, it would have been hard to tell me otherwise, to show me where my dreams had begun to fade to nightmares, summertime fast becoming my life's blizzard.

It took several years of moving from one neighborhood to the next, but my parents finally settled us in a huge, weathered brownstone on the tree lined streets of Bedford-Stuyvesant. Mom and Dad were southern folks, part of that generation who reached beyond the horrors of strange fruit swaying from weeping trees; they had migrated north on the hopes of their parents and the promises of a not-so-distant future. Were Pop a different sort of man, he might've buckled under the weight of a reality which couldn't afford his dreams; instead he hustled his way through college on a basketball scholarship and an iron will, making sure dreams were the realities toward which his family could reach. And, perhaps it was the nature of her character or the force of her will that made Mom a phenomenon too early to be fully appreciated, but at a time when high school was still an achievement for most of us, Mom had finished her post undergraduate degree. She had that unique ability to make one yearn for the stars while anchoring firmly on earth. Little black boy dreaming, growing up on tree lined streets in Brooklyn, life was good to me and my memories of those first days are fond, full of piggyback rides, temper tantrums and a new bike each Christmas.



The arrival of my brother was an event which caused conflicting emotions: Joy at the responsibility of being an older brother, of providing an example to this bundle of wonder who would depend on me, but horror at the immediacy and abruptness of the moment in which my parents required that I grow up. It was suddenness which spoke of the gradual potential of new hopes, the possibilities of unfulfilled dreams, and the immense pitfalls of our humanity - children and parents alike - to which we are all susceptible. A suddenness complicated by the confusion of child's wants and his parents' dreams. While my parents tried not to usher my brother and I into the realm of their dreams, it was their unconscious recognition of these dreams that reflected back to them in the face of my brother and left me isolated and lonely on an island called home. And it was that loneliness, that isolation, the reflection of my brother and the persistence of their dreams which pressed down on me, weighed in on my consciousness and fueled the potency of my nightmares, questioning my worth and the supposed limitations my life offered.

Sex was more an assumed conversation rather than an obvious issue in my family: discussion on the topic between my Father and I always involved obscure situations and distant language commenting on the potential between myself and whomever I was calling girlfriend at the moment. Mother's advice was to sheath whatever desire was stirring in my pants - I was not yet ready for the potential responsibility. Between the two of them teen pregnancy avoidance was the goal and, sensing the awkwardness of those superficial conversations, I never let on that my desire lay elsewhere.

The developing nightmare which scared me the most, settled me into the deepest, most wintry part of my life, was a peculiar fascination with other boys. The fascination was even more profound than the discovery I made while drying myself one morning: Through some mysterious combination of rhythm and speed, with alternating amounts of pressure, I had elicited, from within the constraints of my loins, an extraordinary amount of pleasure, ending up collapsed and breathless across the washer machine. The experience preoccupied me for the better part of a week before my parochial school education informed me that this was self-manipulation (Actually, masturbation) for which the penalty was an eternity in hell (actually, the remote possibility of calluses to either participating member was the worst of it). So, too, it informed me, was the penalty for my preoccupation with other boys, but neither circumstance was ever part of their assumptions in conversations with my parents.

By the time I was a Junior in high school, I managed to perfect the daily mechanics necessary to stay alive. Black boy, not-so-little, growing up on the tree lined streets of Brooklyn, there was no one with whom I could talk, no where to turn, and it became increasingly difficult to live with myself. Somehow, I negotiated the nightmares, my life gaining in momentum as I successfully avoided myself, staying just a step ahead of self-destruction, managing, for a time, to escape impending doom. But the summertime had faded and winter settled, the blizzard of my life complete. So, I did what my parochial school education - salvation, I thought - advised: Will it out of existence - any way you could. Pray for forgiveness. Hard. Subject closed.

I didn't expect for it to come back.

# WHAT'S GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE?

*What's going on in your life is a column directed toward a more positive understanding of the issues and concerns you may encounter in day to day living. Whether that be job, relationships or individual personal goals...*

So tell us - What's going on in your life?

*Dear Geanie,*

*My lover and I have been in a long distance relationship for four years. She lives thousands of miles away and comes to visit twice a year. She has always been very good to me. She insists on paying my rent and bills, in an attempt to control things. However I often become restless while she's away. I love her very much but I'm wondering is it wrong to have my sexual desires taken care of by another while she's away?*

*Signed Frustrated*

Dear Frustrated,

No wonder you are frustrated! In order to answer your direct question, I must first comment on some stressors that are glaringly apparent in the context of this question.

Firstly, it is, AT BEST, difficult to have a short-term distant relationship. Four years in this type of relationship would be extremely trying. Coupled with the fact that on average you see this person once every six months is certainly not conducive to the soil which would blossom the strength and healthiness of a solid, long lasting relationship.

For couples, many issues and obstacles must be hurdled. And many wants, needs, and goals must be responded to by the relationship. The opportunity to meet many of these tasks is not available with distance. This only occurs, in its fullest, through the process of ongoing constant interaction. Granted, distance is an obstacle in itself, but must not be the primary task or FOUNDATION of the relationship.

This brings up certain questions. What is the nature and type of this relationship? What is the understanding which this couple have agreed upon? And, why has this couple found this arrangement to be so bearable for such an extended period?

At any rate, with this in mind, I will attempt to say here that if you have an open relationship, (not exclusively one-on-one), sex with others IS usually permitted. If, however, you have a closed, monogamous relationship, it is usually NOT desirable to have sex with others.

Wanting and fantasizing about others is an ongoing human characteristic. Acting on these desires and fantasies, if the agreement is monogamy, can be extremely detrimental to the relationship.

---

*Geanie Bond is a licensed psychotherapist in private practice in the Atlanta area. Address your letters to: Venus Magazine, P.O. Box 89238, Atlanta, Ga. 30312 or fax: (404) 622-8089*

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# SAINTS & 'AINTS

Between you and me and the gate post, the churches in Cotsville got more 'aints than saints. If Jesus happen to come back one of these old Sunday mornings, he'd do better dropping by the tavern than trying to find a friend in any one of the sanctuaries in this town.

It ain't good to talk about folks, but the truth is, everybody shouting and saying "Amen", ain't got no God in 'em.

At First Bible Way Baptist, the hypocriting got so bad, Missionary Porter had to change her affiliation 'fore she lost her religion. It all come to a head one Sunday morning after the benediction. The right Reverend Obadiah Wilson had just preached an almighty love-your-neighbor sermon and everybody was feeling the fire. I mean even Mary and Lou who had just joined Missionary Porter for that Sunday service found themselves rocking and reeling when Reverend Obadiah brought the message. At one point Mary lost herself and screamed, "Preach the Word!!!" Lou blushed with embarrassment as everyone turned and looked in their direction. Missionary patted Lou's hand and said, "Let the Lord have his way."

And He did. You had to see Clovis Jr., who got so happy he stretched forth his arms and knocked a hole in the just plastered wall where the choir sits. Cleveretta whispered to Teresa how "all that wasn't necessary", but everybody in Cotsville knows that Clovis Jr. don't have no sense when it comes to praising God. Even Missionary Porter remembers when First Bible Way Baptist went to visit its sister church in Scarsboro. They were singing "Near the Cross" and when they got to that part about finding peace beyond the river, Clovis Jr. stood up and stretched forth

his arms and fell backwards knocking down every folding chair that was standing, shouting, "THANK YA!!!!!!!", as he dropped. The pastor, Reverend Rayford Greenfield, didn't appreciate it either., but before the members could set the chairs back up good, Clovis Jr. fell out a second time. "THANK YA!!!!!!!"

This Sunday was no different. Didn't a soul flinch when his fist went through the wall. The organ didn't stop nor the piano. The saints kept giving God their wave praises and the 'aints, like Cleveretta, whispered their criticisms. "I dont't see why a man got to have his hair straightened and curled like that. While he' 'hooping and hollaring, I wonder who he think he gonna fix that wall", Cleveretta fumed. "His hair look better than mine", Teresa added pulling her wig down to cover her nappy kitchen which had been showing for most of the service.

Mother Martha, who didn't like to say nothing wrong on nobody, was down right disgusted with Clovis Jr. He looked right female in his choir robe. When it came tome to lead the song, he flapped his arms and bent and swayed like he had rubber in his body. "Sugar in his blood", Mother Martha was known to remark every week. Missionary Porter patted Martha's shoulder every chance she got and said, "just bless him, he's really so sweet."

Clovis Jr. wasn't thinking about Martha, Mary or John; he had his mind stayed on Jesus and that new male member that recently joined the choir. Michael Kincaid, who had just moved to Cotsville from St. Louie, was a fine, strapping young man. He dressed in fashion style and his cologne stank so good he could have got up in that choir even if he didn't sing like a sparrow. This very Sunday when Clovis Jr. thought about the dinner he'd be having with this just joined choir member after service, he reared back and stretched out with joy and when he came to himself he was pulling his fist out of the new plastered wall where the choir sits. Wasn't nothing to say but, "THANK YA!!!!!!!", and he said or two or three times, right loudly.

This particular Sunday morning, with Mary and Lou in the pews and Reverend Obadiah sho nuff preaching the word, Missionary Porter was sitting gap-legged caught up in the spirit and had no intention of losing her grace, but the stare in the faces and the whispering simmering around her brought her back to reality. Sometimes she wanted to grab folks and shake the stew outta them for being so hateful, but she promised to hold her peace and let the Lord fight her battles a long time ago and she wasn't about to backslide for no imps of the devil, not this Lord's day morning.

The hypocriting got started soon after Reverend Obadiah's heartfelt: "Let the Lord watch between me and thee, while we're absent from one another, Let all God's people say AMEN." Gardenia and Magnolia, the flowers twin daughters, happen to circle after service with Cleveretta, Teresa, and Mother Martha. Missionary knew something was wrong the way all of them kept up their stare on Mary and Lou. Lou noticed it, too, and stuck her hands deep in her pockets. Mary hardly saw anything at first; she was so busy

collecting all the hugs, kisses and praise-the Lords from the other saints. The mess really started when Lou went to help Mary on with her jacket.

"See that!', Martha say.

"It's a 'bomination, I tell ya", Gardenia fumed.

"Seem to me the two of them need to get outta Cotsville and take Clovis Jr. wit 'em!", Mother Martha suggested; her whole body tightening as she spoke.

"I can't see it for the life of me what one woman want with another", Cleveretta whispered.

Teresa say, lifting up the side of her wig to scratch a persistent itch, "I bet Lou is the man when they get together."

Cleveretta say, "She look like she make a good man."

"What you say?", Mother Martha said, her bones cracking as she turned Cleveretta's way. "I'm gonna rebuke that demon, right now!"

"I....I....I mean she look....Lord deliver me." Cleveretta shut her eyes with shame.

Missionary Porter just wished they would all keep their mind on the Lord and out of folks' business, but they didn't know how. Their curiosity and fear gave them a fever. They had to figure things out. All of them stood for a long time yapping, trying to find the answer for why Mary and Lou could set foot in First Bible Way Baptist when everybody in Cotsville knew they was living like a husband and a wife in their mobile home just up the road near where the train runs.

Mother Martha strutted over, the feather in her large Sunday hat flickering nervously with each step.

"Bless His name, Missionary, and how you girls doing? Reverend sho preached this morning, didn't he?"

"Sho did!", Missionary exclaimed. "I'm glad my girls came with me this morning."

"I see the two of y'all still together."

"Always gonna be", Lou blurted angrily.

"Come on back anytime; there's always room at the cross. Jesus saves, you know."

With that Mother Martha turned around and went. Lou's face got red and Mary's smile began to fade. Gardenia and Magnolia snickered while Cleveretta and Teresa nudged each other in satisfaction.

Missionary Porter was disturbed. "Sometimes the folks in Cotsville was as backwards as a jackass", she thought. She grabbed Mary with one hand and Lou with the other and led them quickly out the church door. There was a quiet between them. Mary never let her tears fall. Lou's head pounded with the anger and Missionary studied what to say.

"Let me tell you something about church folks, little girls. Y'all still my girls, ain't ya?"

Even Lou managed to nod yes.

"Margaret learned me that there's many folks in church, but the church ain't in them. See that Martha, with the feather in her hat? She wouldn't get into heaven if her daddy owned it

and them other four, they so heavenly bound they ain't no earthly good."

The sun was shining so bright, the warmth soothed their bodies as they stood holding hands on the stone steps of First Bible Way Baptist.

"Y'all girls remember what I told you about Margaret how she learned me many things. For 15 years she was my teacher and I studied real good under her. Me and Margaret wasn't always welcomed every where we went either. Being two women caught up like that, not everybody accepted us.

There's gonna be many Marthas along your way. We just overcome them with our testimony.

Margaret told me one she preferred sinners to saints and I ask her why. She say, "You always know where you stand with a sinner; you can trust a sinner, but not a saint. They'll lie to you in Jesus name and forsake you, too. A sinner usually mean what he say about you."

Now don't you girls go thinking that the church belong to them , it don't. It belong to you. You got a purer heart.

You know sometimes I miss Margaret. Especially when I don't know what to say. It was the funniest thing. After Jesus, she was the greatest blessing of my life."

Lou was still down right agitated. Even the sun couldn't ease her too far down. Mary tried to cover her saddness by looking away up the road near the tracks where their mobile home sat.

They all better be lucky that it was Sunday, and God was a good God, and that Lou had some respect for Missionary Porter or there might have been a scandal in that sanctuary. Lou is known to act out, especially when it comes to Mary and the love she had for her. Many a time, Mary had to pull Lou in the other direction to keep her from tearing someone's behind out the frame.

Missionary Porter felt the heat of Lou's temper. "Girls, we gonna find ourselves another church. We can't stay here no more. Something wrong when the saints miss the mark. Margaret would say, "Don't get wrapped up." I think we'd do better if we just forgive them for they know not what they do and go over to the Shoney's and eat at the buffet. They got a waiter there name Lee who'll take care of us real good."

And descending them stone stairs, they did just that. Far as anybody knows, Mary, Lou, nor Missionary Porter ain't never set foot up in First Bible Way Baptist Church from that day to this even when they were invited for the usher board fish fry by the right Reverend Obadiah Wilson himself. And they never say a mumbling word about the 'aints that still go there to shout "Hallelujah!"

---

*Noted playwright Dr. Shirlene Holmes, is Assistant Professor of Communic-ations at Georgia State University. "Saints & 'Aints" is taken from her collection of 'Cotsville Stories'.*

## PROFILE OF A WOMAN

**Tonya Poteat**

Age: 25
Hometown: Hawriver, N.C.
Last Book Read: Stone Butch Blues, by Lesly Feinberg
Career: Physician's Assistant
Status: Committed forever

A self described "nerd", Tonya enjoys reading and the mystique of traveling to small towns just to look around.

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# RECIPES

*By Lois A. Grant*

Spring: A Time for Change

As the first signs of spring appear our minds are filled with thoughts of lighter clothing and lighter meals. Today there is a theory that eating fewer calories can increase our longevity. However, when we reduce our caloric intake, we must be sure that we are getting the nutrients our bodies need in order to maintain a healthy life-style. A menu make-over occurs when you take traditional favorites, reduce the amount of calories, fat, cholesterol, and sodium and still produce a meal that is tasty and delicious. Presented below is a sample of a menu make-over.

VEGETABLE LASAGNA

2 cups broccoli flowerets
1 cup thinly sliced zucchini
1 cup thinly sliced yellow squash
1 cup thinly sliced carrot
Vegetable cooking spray
1 1\2 cups thinly sliced fresh mushrooms
1 cup chopped onion
3 cups no-salt-added tomato sauce
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon dried Italian seasoning
1 teaspoon dried basil
3\4 o 1 teaspoon pepper
1\2 teaspoon salt
1 (16 ounce) carton 1% low-fat cottage cheese
1\2 cup frozen egg substitute, thawed
8 cooked lasagna noodles (cooked without salt or fat)
1 cup (4 ounces) shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese

Arrange first 4 ingredients in a vegetable steamer over boiling water. Cover and steam 4 to 5 minutes or until vegetables are crisp-tender; drain. Transfer to a bowl; set aside.

Coat a nonstick skillet with cooking spray. Place skillet over medium-high heat until hot. Add mushrooms and onion; saute until tender. Add to broccoli mixture.

Combine tomato sauce and next 5 ingredients in a small bowl, stirring well. Combine cottage cheese and egg substitute, stirring well.

Spread 1\2 cup tomato sauce mixture over bottom of a 13 x 9 x 2 inch baking dish coated with cooking spray. Place 4 lasagna noodles evenly over vegetable mixture. Top with remaining 4 noodles and remaining tomato sauce mixture.

Cover and bake at 350 degreesfor 40 minutes. Uncover and sprinkle with mozzarella cheese. Bake, uncovered, an additional 10 minutes or until cheese melts. Let lasagna stand 15 minutes before serving. Yield: 8 servings.

PER SERVING: 234 cal, 3.6g fat, cholesterol 10mg, and sodium 500mg.

Traditional Vegetable Lasagna

PER SERVING: 580 cal, 27g fat, cholesterol 59mg, and sodium 1,365mg.

BANANA PUDDING

2 cups cold 2% low-fat milk
1 1.4 ounce package fat-free, sugar free instant Jello vanilla pudding
16 vanilla wafers
1 large banana
1 cup Cool Whip Lite

Mix milk and pudding according to directions on the box. Line 4 1\2 cup (4 ounce) pyrex dishes (or other 4 ounce bowls) with 2 vanilla wafers, then place 4 thin slices of banana on top of the wafers. Repeat layers with 2 vanilla wafers and 4 thin slices of banana.

Spoon pudding mixture over the banana slices shaking the dish so the pudding flows to the bottom. Fill pudding to about 1\4 inch from the rim of the bowl.

Place 2 tablespoons each of Cool Whip on top of the pudding spread until it covers the pudding, making peaks in the Cool Whip to give it height and beauty. Serves 4.

PER SERVING: 245 cal, 1.5g fat, 10mg chol, 60mg sodium

Traditional banana pudding

PER SERVING: 463 cal, 3g fat, 20mg chol, 410mg sodium

Notice the difference in changing just one meal to a heart healthy meal can make. The total reductions were 830 cal, 36.9g fat, 79mg chol, 410mg sodium. So go out and buy yourself a good light or low-calorie cookbook and start by preparing one meal daily using their recipes and you will be able to see a difference in both the way you look and feel. To get even better results, about one hour after you have finished that wonderful meal, go for a brisk 20 minute walk. Talk about living! Be well and enjoy life to the fullest. Happy Eating!

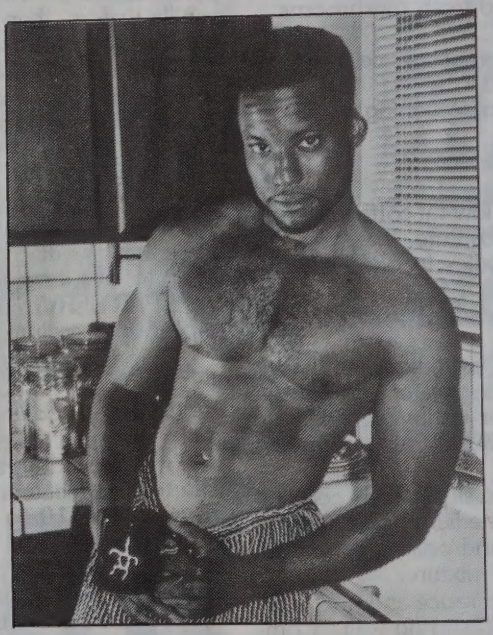
Next Month: Let's Celebrate Easter!

*Lois A Grant, B.S., Food Service Management. Former Catering Culinary Instructor. Owner, Grant Foodservices Unlimited.*

# HEALTH

## 10 GUARANTEED WAYS TO STAY ON YOUR DIET

Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's been munching through winter and fall? If the man in your mirror looks like this guy, then you certainly don't have a problem. If you, like most of us, have been eating your way through the abundance of cold, gray skies, then ten sure fire ways to improve your image are as welcome as thoughts of spring time and the warmth of a sunny day.



The key to staying on any "diet" is to learn to fight those food cravings that lead us directly to the refrigerator searching for left over macaroni and cheese and pound cake. These evil temptations wreak havoc on our most admirable dieting efforts. But fear not: Cravings may be powerful, but they can be overcome. Following are ten proven ways to curb the urge to munch out!

1) Drown you appetite: Drinking generous amounts of water is the number one way to reduce your appetite. Because oceans of water takes up lots of space in your stomach, you'll feel full, which will reduce your urge to eat. Aim to take sixty-four ounces of fluid a day, sipping on a three or four ounce glass at a time.

2) Munch selectively: Nibbling on small amounts of food throughout the day suppresses the appetite more than eating two or three larger meals. Munching on low-fat, high-fiber foods every few hours keeps the insulin levels steadier - and lower - than gorging. (High insulin levels stimulate appetite and prompt fat cells to take in fat molecules instead of allowing muscles to use them as energy.) Munching on carrots, peaches, oranges, pasta, potatoes, and oatmeal will keep your appetite in line.

3) Soup it up: Why is soup so satisfying? Researchers speculate that it takes up a lot of space in the stomach and is high in carbohydrates. Sip soup before large dinners or as a meal itself. Opt for a tomato-based soup; it's less fattening

than cream based soups and mayo-laden salads.

4) Load up on complex carbohydrates: Low-fat, high-carbohydrate foods such as rice, potatoes, beans and pasta, (without butter or sour cream), satisfy the appetite with fewer calories that high-fat foods, primarily be cause carbohydrates are easily converted to glycogen; fat is not, sand stored glycogen, the body's most important energy source, suppresses hunger.

5) Say yes to spicy foods: Mexican, Thai, Cajun and Jamaican cuisines all fill you more quickly than blander foods. The flavor is so intense you don't need so much to satisfy your appetite. In addition, spicy foods speed up your metabolic rate. The faster this rate, the more heat your body produces, and whatever warms you up, slims you down. So stock up on hot peppers, horseradish, chill powder and other spicy condiments and use them often!

6) Feast on fiber: Fibrous foods often require thorough chewing, which slows down your eating, and eating more slowly sometimes means eating less because your body has more time to recognize that it has received ample food. Twenty-five grams of fiber per day is recommended so stock up on barly, corn, oat products, beans, carrots and sweet potatoes and munch on these foods every day.

7) Eat Simply: Serving a wide variety of foods at one meal can cause you to eat more than you otherwise would. In other words, once you've had your fill of roast beef and bread, you may still crave the mashed potatoes and gravy. Limit entrees and side dishes to one per meal. Better yet, opt for a one pot meal both you and your lover can enjoy.

8) Out-exercise your appetite: Got the munchies? Take a walk, ride a bike, or head for the gym. Exercise reduces your immediate appetite by controlling insulin levels in your bloodstream, (steady, lower insulin levels depress the appetite), and by heating the body. (Few people can eat a lot after an intense aerobic exercise.)

9) Ask yourself why you want to eat: Eighty-five percent of us probably have psychological or emotional motives for overeating, and one of the primary ones is stress. If you habitually turn to food to soothe bad feelings, you must develop an alternate strategy to feel better. This means confronting your problem, not feeding it. Anti-stress measures , from counseling to a hot bath, can help you feel better and eat less.

10) Know your triggers: Eating is so dependent on external cues that just seeing food makes us want to eat. To eliminate this problem, bar fattening foods from your home. If your lover or housemate must have sweets, or high-fat foods on hand, ask him or her to hide them from you! Also, keep a record of everything you eat for one week. Write down absolutely everything you eat, why you ate it and why you started thinking about food. (Was it an advertisement, an aroma, an emotion?) Then look for patterns in your responses to certain stimuli. By identifying your appetite cues, you may be able to outsmart a craving the next time it rears its ugly head.

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*Para Lee McGee is a free lance writer from Hopewell, New Jersey who specializes in health related issues.*

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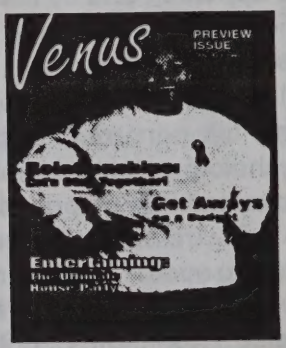


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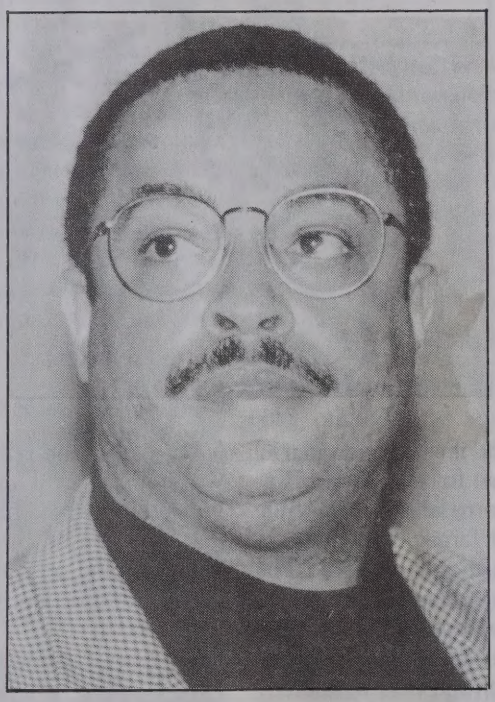
# CONFRONTATION WITH SELF:

## *A Conversation with E. Lynn Harris*

*by Douglas E. Jones*

His success has been nothing short of phenomenal, documented by his visibility to Black Gay America, Black America, as well as America in general. Best-selling thirtysomething author E. Lynn Harris has captured the minds and hearts of thousands with his books Invisible Life and Just As I Am. In a time when America has been catapulted backwards into the grips of staunch Republican conservatism, Mr. Harris has taken the opportunity to explain the truths of life, of differing realities, possibly opening the door towards the beginnings of community and societal wide healing. The opportunity to tell his story, to explain his truths, has not been without its own unique challenges, but Mr. Harris relishes those memories. He has overcome those challenges and has used the combination of his sales savvy and 'down home' delivery to keep him connected and grounded to his audience. Lynn, as he is known—the 'E' is a secret which he must keep for himself, he notes with a twinkle of mischief in his eyes—has not assumed the mantle of fame endemic to an author who has exceeded anticipated sales of 10,000 books by almost twenty times that amount, with no end in sight. And *this* on the eve of the paperback release of Just As I Am. Recently, he addressed a packed audience at Georgia State University; the bond between he and the crowd was instantaneous and as I searched for a word to accurately describe him the mantra of *'Realness!'* kept recurring in my mind. I invite you to read why.



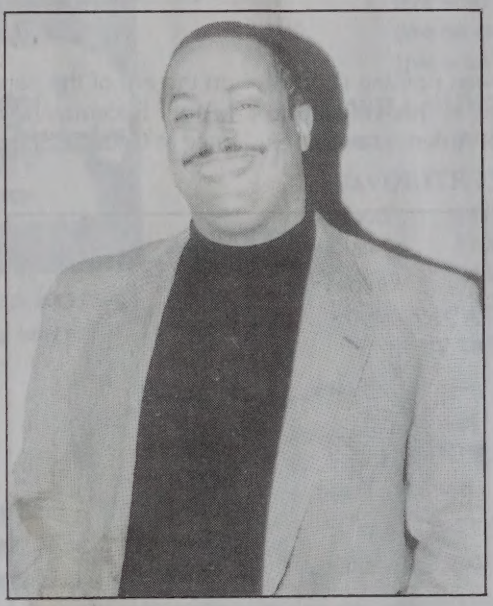
**Venus Magazine:** When you started writing the books, did you have a target audience in my mind or did you write from personal experience?

**Lynn Harris:** I wrote the books from personal experience. I didn't necessarily have a target audience in mind. I just knew the truth of what I was writing about.

**VM:** We've spoken before about the stark nature of the fan mail that you've received relative to Just As I Am. In terms of Black gay men, would you comment on some of those responses?

**LH:** You know, it's amazing the amount of pain people are in—especially young, Black gay men. One person wrote me and said that he wished he had this book in high school. I've gotten a letter from a professional athlete who wrote me completely anonymously, he

didn't want to use his name—he couldn't afford to 'come out'. But he said that the books [Invisible Life and Just As I Am] have touched him. He said that so much of the books were true and that, even though he couldn't come out, the books have helped him. I answer all of my mail, but I couldn't write him back—he just signed a single name to the letter. He just wanted me to know.



**VM:** That is so painful when you consider the issue of 'coming out' and the mental and emotional freedom that goes along with it. Certainly, the goal is not for everyone to come out, but everyone should at least have the freedom to do so if that's what they choose.

**LH**: I agree with you that everyone can't come out, but I think it's a shame because since I've written the book and since I've come out, my life has never been better. There is no pretense, there are no more lies and it's just a wonderful way to live and I wish that for everyone. But, everyone still has to worry about jobs, they still have to worry about family, they have to worry about someone in their life. This is my job now, so I'm not threatened by anyone.

**VM:** How do we balance those points between family, jobs, and having someone in your life? How can that dilemma be negotiated? How much is 'too out'—how much 'out' can 'out' be?

**LH**: I think that people can find love while being in the closet, because a lot of Black men are in the closet and somehow we manage to find each other. But, I think that some of the things that lovers enjoy with each other become somewhat restricted. You know, like sharing being in love with your parents, your brothers and sisters, or just the people who are important to you. That is not a possibility if you're in the closet. It also minimizes or negates how many of us there actually are. Recently, a friend—who I've known for a long time—told me her brother came out to her and she was totally in shock. She said she would have never guessed it in a million years and although she was able to accept it because of having known me, *she* thought that maybe *I* was different. But, she saw that this can happen in a family where there is a mother and father, where there is a lot of love, where there are no harsh realities.

**VM:** The 'American Dream'.

**LH:** Right. She asked him how long he'd been gay and he said all his life. It shocked her because she finally realized that it wasn't due to some imbalance. You know, I always tell people, 'What do you think? That there's someone secretly taking our little Black boys in the middle of the night and making them gay?' That's not what's happening.

**VM:** Is that the point of beginnings at which we see Raymond, Jr. in Just As I Am? In Invisible Life we see he starts the process and in Just As I Am he continues trying to reconcile what is going on with Kyle, with what's going in his personal life, with how he's interacting with Nicole.

**LH:** Yeah. I wanted to see some growth with him, because he's like a lot of people. I still have a lot of friends who are in the closet. The majority of letters I get are from people who are in the closet. They just need someone they can talk to—the pain, you can almost feel it in the letters. Where do they go? It's really difficult because there really is no place for young, Black gay men and lesbian women to go. Our community isn't organized; there's no safe haven. The White gay community is definitely not a place where we can find a permanent home.

VM: Because of the challenges of racism.

**LH:** Right. You know, home should be a place where you feel completely safe and completely at *home*. And we may not feel that in the Black community as a whole because they don't understand us. Then, when we go into the White gay community, there is that problem of racism, be it overt or subtle.

**VM:** How can we bridge that gap? If the Black community is homophobic, where is our opportunity for healing?
**LH:** I don't think that the Black community is as much homophobic as they are uneducated and uninformed. The opportunity is for more people to share their lives with their families, with their churches, with those people who are important to them, then people would see that this is not something that people would willy-nilly go out and choose. Most of the Black lesbian and gay people that I know don't fit those stereotypes which cause fear in our community. If people were more honest and open about who they are the community would see that . *That* is what I tried to do with Just As I Am; if you have any kind of faith, if you have any kind of backbone, your *faith* tells you that God made you in your own image and that you really have to be true to yourself.

When this is all over—when we are dead—it really won't matter what you thought of me. What will matter most is what I knew to be true about myself and what God already knew. And how I lived my life. And how I lived my life. *And how I lived my life.* If you're living your life in the closet, I'm not saying that you're living a lie, but you're not really living your life.

There's so much difference in what a 'gay life' is, I mean, what is that? Just live your life the way you see fit—but, be comfortable with it, don't restrict your life and don't live your life in fear.
**VM:** You touched briefly on the need for Black gays and lesbians to share with our churches and spirituality is a strong theme in Just As I Am. Are you a member of New Birth Baptist Church?
**LH:** I'm getting ready to move my membership.
**VM:** So, it's true—that the church is fostering a homophobic environment?
**LH:** Well, yes, Pastor Long said something recently in *Newsweek* or *Time Magazine* that really unnerved me and the last time I was there he was preaching on it. It seems like there's been a change because when I first started going there, I thought it was a wonderful place and I felt like the spirit was there and that there was a lot of love there. But, lately when I've gone I've felt this homophobic, hate, kind of atmosphere, so I am not going back there anymore and I'm going to move my membership. I'm really having a big battle with church right now because I think church should be a place where we preach love and the churches are not. They are absolutely not. My faith is stronger now than its ever been and I don't need human beings to dictate to me how I should be.

Church should be a place where we get love, where we go and celebrate the love that Christ has for us. It's become a political thing, it's become something that it should have never been. I'm looking for a place where all they preach are the teachings of Jesus Christ and love. And I really have a problem with the fact that so many gay brothers and lesbian sisters just sit in these homophobic churches and allow that stuff to go on.

**VM:** In terms of ground level acceptance of self, as Black gays, what are we doing to ourselves that will not allow us to come into each others' spaces when we are trying to build relationships.
**LH:** A fear of really revealing ourselves. It boggles the mind the way we treat each other—the way we have such unhealthy relationships. It's because we have no role models [in the context of being gay], we have no one to look up to and we run whenever there's a real risk of intimacy. Basically, I think it's because of how we're taught and how we're raised as men—gay men are no different from straight men in that respect. The same that Black women are crying about, Black gay men are crying about in terms of their treatment of each other.
**VM:** Do you consider yourself a role model?
**LH:** No.
**VM:** Why not?
**LH:** Simply because I think people need to

find their role models at home.

**VM:** But, when you talk about structuring the reality of a Black gay man and him not having anyone to look up to, you're in a prime position to be that person.

**LH:** I accept it only if people realize that I'm human and that I make mistakes, that I'm not perfect, and that I'm still a work in progress. A role model in the sense of offering encouragement? Yeah, because I answer every bit of mail that I get—I don't give a form letter. It's getting overwhelming, but I still take that time because people write me and they share so much of their lives with me. I can't ignore that. It's funny, I've been thinking a lot about my grandmother, who just passed, and she always thought that I would be a minister or something and in a lot of respects I do feel like Christ is working through me. I ask myself, why me? I'm no different from anyone else, why am I getting this opportunity? There have been a few letters which really do make me cry, because people talk about how much I've helped them and I don't know what I've done. I've just basically given what I have learned to be true about myself and what I have learned to be true about life. So, I do take the designation of role model with a good deal of apprehension.

**VM:** The're numerous stories describing your challenges in bringing Invisible Life to the market place. Are publishers finally recognizing the potential of their Black gay and lesbian readership? Are there more opportunities for emerging Black lesbian and gay writers?

**LH:** I hope so. I definitely hope so. I think publishers have seen, with myself, with James Earl Hardy [author of *B-Boy Blues*], that those stories are definitely marketable and that we're looking for stories about ourselves. Publishing is a very closed society. Even for those who get in, you've got to make sure your publisher is behind you and will make a commitment to getting your book out there and getting you the same opportunities that other authors get. Even with the number of Black authors—both gay and straight—that are out there, there is only a small percentage of them that are getting the dollars behind advertising and marketing. I've been very blessed at Doubleday. I couldn't have found a better home, but that's not everyone's situation. Publishers are going to have learn about the diversity of our issues. E. Lynn Harris' story is not the only story out there and what I've done is to show that there is a market for our kind of stories.

**VM:** What are your expectations of Black lesbians and gays as we move towards the objective of establishing a visible and viable Black gay community?

**LH:** I think it has to start with a oneness of self and then move to community. I just don't see a cohesive unit anywhere—in terms of the Black gay community. There are pockets of people trying to do things, trying to make changes, but no one has really captured the masses.

VM: You have success, you are recognized, what's important to you right now?

**LH:** Well, I realize that it's people who are my employer—the people with whom I come into contact everyday. I have to make myself accessible; I have to be out there talking to folks and answering their letters. If I took the high road and said, 'Well, I don't have to do this anymore,' I would be right back to where I started. The one thing that I prayed for after I prayed for success was to remain humble. I don't want to ever forget what a blessing this has been for me; it's not because I'm a great writer—it's just because this is my time. And there will be other people after me and I hope they respond to success in a similar way. To me that's the most important thing: That I stay grounded and that I not think, for one second, that I'm better than anyone else.

VM: What's in the future for you? Can we expect to hear anymore about Raymond, Jr.?

**LH:** You know, I was thinking about him today—wondering how he's doing. I think he and Trent are going to be happy. What I'd like to do with him in the future is to show his entire growth and to show that he's comfortable with himself and in a stable relationship. That's something that people have asked me to do: Try and provide some guidelines for a successful relationship. I think we could have successful relationships if we could be completely honest with ourselves and one another.

**VM:** So, that's the message—it starts with self.

**LH:** It starts with self.

**VM:** Thank you for your time and your example.

**LH :** You're very welcome. Thank you.

# REVIEWS

## BOOKS

### LAUGHING IN THE DARK: FROM COLORED GIRL TO WOMAN OF COLOR by B.J.

This is the story of the author. Patrice Gaines, who is introduced to us as a black girl who feels powerless, attempts to gain power through the men in her life.

Teenage pregnancy, marriage to someone who is not the father of her baby and deceiving her in-laws into believing their son is the father are just a few of the mistakes she makes early in life. Her father's inability to express his love for her is a major factor in her decisions to continually choose men who use and abuse her.

Patrice gives us a painful but honest look at her life while struggling to survive in a world where she believes her strength comes from the men she loves. She is raped, introduced to drugs by these men and finally finds herself imprisoned because she carries drugs for her man. But despite these painful events, this book is far from depressing. It is empowering, inspirational and hopeful because she survives and, with the help of a therapist, learns to love herself. The message of self-empowerment through self-love is one that can never be heard too much. We are shown that despite living in a society where sexism, racism and homophobia are all too common, self-love is the key to unlocking these chains and is vital in destroying self-hatred!

Gaines states that she wrote this book for "those young sisters" she witnessed on her newspaper beat. However, this forty plus lesbian found it to be a source of inspiration and empowerment. Her message of self-love has something to offer everyone of us regardless of age, race or sex and is a message we all vitally need to hear and hear and hear again. LAUGHING IN THE DARK is a book that reminds us that no life is so hopeless it cannot be saved.

## PLAYS

### "SENSUALITY"

Sisters of 30 Something Special presented Think It's Not When It Is, Inc., a female theatre troupe from NYC last month at the West End Cultural Arts Center. Shame on you if you were not in the mix. The girls had it going on! These four seasoned professionals presented true to life black lesbian day-to-day drama in a way that was real, but not abrasive, funny but not ridiculous, and delivered a powerfully, upbeat message that left a packed house full of gorgeous women high on a cloud of black lesbian esteem! Our hats are off to promoter, Tracy Fields, for a first class job well done!!

PROFILE OF A QUEEN

**Tina Divore**

Age: 41

Hometown: Tallahassee, Fla.

Status: In a relationship for about three years

Former Titles: Ms. World, Ms. Atlanta, Ms. Hotlanta

A legend in her own time, Tina Divore is one of the classiest performers to ever grace the stage. She sends a positive message with each performance and handles her audience with such ease and warmth that you can't help but feel connected to her very soul. "I have a great faith in God and I guess that comes across in what I do." As show director at the Armory in Atlanta, Tina Divore is a dance down memory lane for those of us who have enjoyed her for years.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# CLASSIFIED

**PROGRAM DIRECTOR NEEDED:**

Responsible for overseeing all client services, housing, volunteer management and prevention education programs. Experience working with people of color, people living with HIV/AIDS, gays, transgender, lesbians, bisexuals. Minimum of three years administrative and supervisory experience, five years employment in HIV/AIDS related field, MSW preferred. Send resume, cover letter and three references to: Rudolf H. Carn, AESM, Inc., P.O. Box 87277, Atlanta, GA, 30337. AESM is an E.O.E.

**HOUSE MANAGER NEEDED:**

Responsible for residential operations, implementation of the residential program and developmental/administration of the residence. Experience developing and managing social service programs for gay/bisexual men and lesbians. Experience in HIV/AIDS disease and nonprofit organizations preferred. Send resume, cover letter to: Delores Rollins, AESM, P.O. Box 87277, Atlanta, GA, 30337. AESM is an E.O.E

**HIV/AIDS OUTREACH WORKERS NEEDED:**

Late evenings and nights (20 hrs/wk) to conduct outreach to patrons of black gay night spots, will train. Persons should be comfortable with frank talk about HIV/AIDS & Sex. Please send resume & cover letter to: AIDS Education/Services for Minorities, P.O. Box 87277, Atlanta, GA, 30337. AESM is an E.O.E.

**LOCAL DISTRIBUTOR NEEDED**

Must have truck or van and be physically able to lift 25lb. boxes. Part time position. 622-8069, Venus Line.

**PROOF READER NEEDED**

Volunteer needed only a few hours every month to review text before publication. 622-8069, Venus Line.

**OLYMPIC-SIZE VICTORIAN**

Two-story, stucco exterior, three bedrooms, two full baths, A/C, gorgeous oak floors throughout, fabulous winding staircase, stained glass window, loaded with character, off street parking, deck! Only minutes from the opening ceremonies! $125.00. Call Charlene: (404) 627-0520

**PICTURE PERFECT BUNGALOW**

This Victorian on the park is an excellent home for the most meticulous buyer. Glamorous entrance foyer, gallery style central hall, seven transoms, four fireplaces, gleaming heart pine floors, A/C, privately fenced lot. $135,000. Call Charlene (404) 627-0520

**BARGAIN HUNTER'S DOWNTOWN DEAL**

Two spacious Victorians, partially renovated, A/C, new roof, hardwood floors, off street parking. You've got the basics, now bring your imagination. Both owners want offers yesterday! Mid 80's. Call Charlene: (404) 627-0520

**STARTER WITH CHARACTER**

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# BUSINESS

## HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR TAX CONSULTANT

*By Syles Williams*

If that old shoe box is empty or just became a place to put those receipts you didn't know what to do with, or that new file box you purchased last year as recommended by your tax preparer is still in the cellophane, or you haven't emptied your purse yet, or that junk drawer that you can hardly open now just seems too overwhelming to tackle, you may want to use the following checklist as a guide to prepare yourself for getting ready to see someone like me, your PERSONAL TAX CONSULTANT.

1. Copies of last year's tax returns (Federal, state, local). (Legible, please.)

2. All W-2s, 1099-Rs, interest and dividend earned statements, social security benefits statement, and any other statement of income earned or unearned. (If you received a statement, believe me, IRS got a copy first.)

3. Labels and envelopes from your Federal, State and local booklets. (Using these pre-addressed labels expedites the processing of the returns for quicker refunds.)

4. Refund statement of state or local 1993 income taxes. (You may or may not have to report your previous refund(s).)

5. All **compiled** business, rental, or farm income and expense documents. (That extra brown bag or shoe box will cost you.)

6. All documents regarding any property or stocks sold during the year. (In addition, what was your cost basis in these items sold? The reaction to this question is awesome!)

7. UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION statement. (I know you didn't think you had to pay taxes on this money, after all, you were unemployed. Sorry. It's taxable.)

8. Closing statement for any realty property purchased or refinanced during 1991- 1994. (You may have a refund coming from those seller-paid points.)

9. CHILD CARE provider information. Name, address, identification number of provider and amount paid. (This deduction may be disallowed if the information is not provided.)

10. A CHECK FOR THE PREPARATION OF YOUR TAX RETURN. (A BIGGER CHECK IF WE (TAX PREPARERS) HAVE TO FIND ITEMS 1-9 IN THE BROWN BAG OR SHOE BOX.)

Now, if all else fails, you could purchase one of those tax programs and do it yourself, or you could let IRS prepare them (returns) for you. Well, in either case, would you know that you are getting all the breaks that are available?

In the event that I don't see your smiling face in my place, here are a few

tax tips for you and/or your tax preparer.

1. The basic earned income credit for 1994 is available to Taxpayers with qualifying children and Taxpayers without qualifying children. To qualify, your income must not exceed: $23,754 if you have one qualifying child, $25,295 if you have two or more qualifying children, $8,999 without any qualifying child.

2. Educational expenses (tuition, books, travel, seminars) to improve your present skills or to maintain your present job, may be deducted, if you itemize your deductions.

3. Casualty losses (flood, fire, theft, etc.) that exceed 10% of your adjusted gross income are deductible providing certain requirements are met.

4. Contributions of $250 or more at any one time, cash or non cash, requires a written acknowledgement from the donee organization on or before the date the return is filed.

5. If a chemically dependent person gets treatment at a therapeutic center (drug or alcohol abuse center), the costs of the care, including room and board, are deductible as medical expenses. Mileage to AA or DA meetings are also deductible.

6. The portion of the legal fee for advice on the tax consequences of the divorce is deductible.

7. Job seeking expenses, (travel, transportation, resumes, etc.) are deductible even though job placement was unsuccessful.

8. Your dependent family member living with you last year could very well qualify you for head of household status if you are single and other requirements are met.

9. Taxpayers who underestimate withholdings or estimated payments by ten percent or more may be penalized. Be sure of proper withholding on second jobs and all employee distributions from profit sharing and pension plans.

10. Always keep tax returns, receipts and tax supporting documents for at least 5 years. Be sure to sign, date and mail all returns by April 17, 1995. Also be sure to include social security numbers, form numbers and years paid, on all checks submitted to IRS or state and local authorities.

Well, now that you have become an instant tax expert, you might be ready to crunch those numbers, take an aspirin, or leave all tax preparation to the TAX PREPARERS!

**GOOD LUCK AND HAPPY BIG REFUND!!**


God Is Love

(404) 763-2149

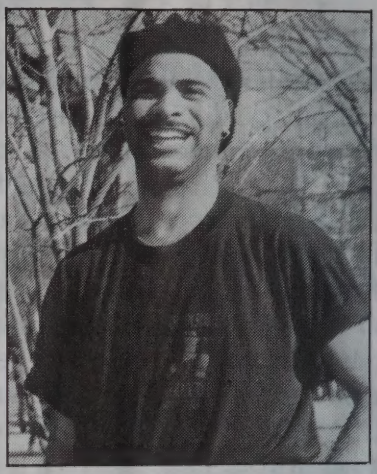
SYLESTER WILLIAMS
&
ASSOCIATES

ACCOUNTANT
FINANCIAL & TAX CONSULTANT
*Enrolled Agent With IRS*

2714 HOLLEY COURT
EAST POINT, GA 30344

## PROFILE OF A MAN

**Willie Broussard**



Age: 28
Status: Single
Hometown: Port Author, Texas
Career: Reservation supervisor, and bartender - Back Door Pub
Last Book Read: "In Search of Satisfaction", by J. California Cooper

Willie resides in our nation's capital and is Hospitality Chair of the 1995 Black Lesbian & Gay Pride Day, Inc. in Washington, D.C. He enjoys black novels, jazz, gospel, soft soul and reggae. He governs himself in the philosophy of being help to others.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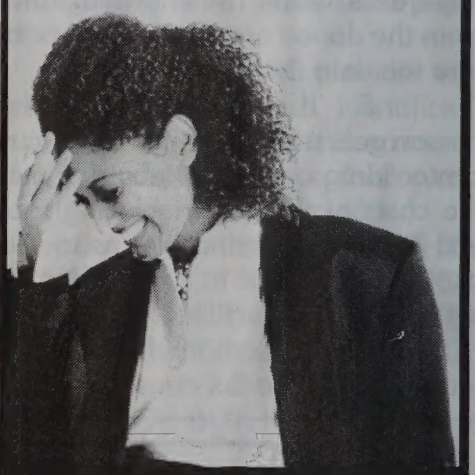

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**Spiritual Vision** is one of the most empowering aspects of a healthy, fulfilling life, and one of the most important gifts Gay men can share with each other and the world.

**Join us** in a day of spiritual exploration and weaving.

**Our process** involves sharing at many levels and includes large and small group interaction, discussion, facilitated movement, ritual, various workshops, a heart circle, vegetarian lunch, and an evening party.

**The day** is brought to you by our Gay Spirit Visions community, part of our ongoing exploration which includes an annual Conference in Highlands, North Carolina. We welcome newcomers as well as previous participants.

**WHEN: Saturday, April 1, 1995. 9:30AM - 6:00PM**
**WHERE: Friends Meeting House**
**Party 8:00PM - Midnight. Location to be announced**
**COST: $30 preregistered by March 25. $35 at the door.**
**No one will be turned away for lack of funds.**

Send registration fee to:
**GSV/Spring Conference**
**P.O. Box 339**
**Decatur, GA 30031-0339**
For more information call Todd at 284-4286.

Make plans now for the sixth Gay Spirit Visions Conference, **September 21 - 24, 1995**. *Awakening the Elder Within: A Journey of Soul.* The Friends Meeting House is located at 701 W. Howard Avenue in Decatur.


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# EDUCATION

## SISTERLOVE

AIDS is a serious problem for women. Women who are sexually active and/or are active drug users are a great risk for HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), the cause of AIDS. Women who are infected with HIV need comprehensive support, treatment and care. To take care of ourselves and our families, we must become educated about the risks and effects of AIDS. Women should also be supported in their daily lives as they live with this disease.

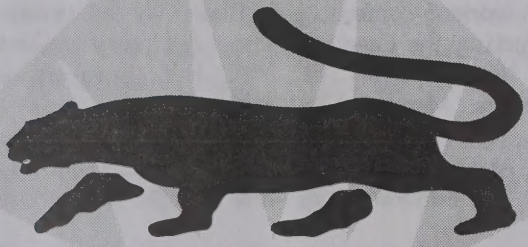
SisterLove, Inc. is a nonprofit organization established to provide education and support for women by women who are at risk for or are already infected with HIV or have AIDS. While we recognize and address the needs of all women, African-American women, the most affected population among women with AIDS, receive particular attention within all our culturally appropriate programs.

The LoveHouse Supportive Living and Love Works day Activities Program includes housing, support groups, case management, daily workshops and seminars, outings and retreats for HIV+ women. Both programs currently have space available. For more information on how to apply, contact Annette Dufau at (404) 696-1350.

Founder and director Dazon Dixon was presented with the Fund for Southern Communities' annual "Touchbearer Award". This prestigious award is presented to an individual in recognition of their superior effort for grassroots social change. The recipients reflect the strength and diversity of the movement for social change in the South. Congratulations to Dazon and thank you for your strong example.

**DID YOU KNOW THAT IN METRO ATLANTA OVER:**

# 54% OF ALL AIDS cases are BLACK; 67% of ALL BLACK MEN WITH AIDS are GAY or BISEXUAL. AIDS IS THE #1 CAUSE OF DEATH AMONG BLACK MEN AGES 25-44.



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**AESM is on the PROWL; and we're coming to your neighborhood!! As of yet, there is no known cure for AIDS. Our purpose is to assist and educate those who have been and are at risk of being infected with HIV. AESM's Board of Directors, Staff, and Volunteers are driven by the love and concern for our brothers and sisters with this motto: "We Love You, Love Yourself...BE SAFE..."**

If you would like to volunteer, need information or make a tax deductible contribution please contact:

**AIDS EDUCATION/SERVICES FOR MINORITIES (AESM)**
**1432 Donnelly Ave., SW Atlanta, GA 30310 (404) 753-2900/4300**

# EVENTS CALENDAR

## MARCH

2

**New York** - Wow Cafe, in association with Kaleidoscope Theatre, presents three plays in one show! "Revolutionaries", "The Break", and "Crib". March 2 - 4, 1995, 8:00 p.m., $8.00. 59 East 4th St. Call (212) 460-8067

3

**New York** - G. Wells & Associates presents the Dynasty Affair. Dress to impress; Brooklyn. Contact Bobbie Moore, (301) 596-6167

9

**New York** - A working conference on Black Gay & Lesbian, Transgender people of African Descent presented by the Graduate School & University Center of City University of New York, Room 404 North 33 W. 42 St., NYC, N.Y. Speakers include Angela Davis and Essex Hemphill, and others. March 9-11, 1995.

10

**Los Angeles** - At The Beach...ATB, presents the 2nd anual Las Vegas Turn Arround! March 10-12, $80.00. The Saturday night Party in Vegas will be hosted by 4 of a Kind. Call (213) 969-1619

11

**New York** - The Four Seasons social Club presents a Dinner Dance at Micky Alan's Showboat, 10:00 p.m. - 3:00 a.m. After five attire. 814 Jamaica Ave., Brooklyn, N.Y. Open bar, $50.00; hold tickets for after party at Edie's Place! Tilden Ave. at 31st St.. For ticket info call Mary at (718) 453-1267

14

**Atlanta** - Women in music/Atlanta presents "Women with Aids Benefit Concert" at Eddie's Attic; 8:00 p.m. 515 McDonough St., Decatur. The concert benefits SisterLove and celebrates Women's History Month. The 1995 Women in Music Calendar will be on sale!! (404)377-4976

15

**Atlanta** - SisterLove presents Shay Youngblood's "Talking Bones", a Lorraine Hansberry Award winning play about three generations of Black women who listen to the voices of their ancestors. 8:00 p.m., Horizon Theatre; $12.00 (404) 753-7733

16

**New York** - Fearnot Productions presents "Dot's Pocono Weekend". Sold out!! March 16 - 19, 1995.

18

**Atlanta** - AIDS 101 Awareness action seminar will be held Covenant Presb. Church, 2641 P'Tree Rd., 8 a.m. - 5:30 $15.00; lunch & childcare provided, call Aid Atlanta (404) 885-6800

19

**Atlanta** - Spring Fling dance by Sisters of 30 Something Special, 4-10 p.m. Club Oxygen (404) 997-6240

## APRIL

8

**New York** - Annual Black and Gold Affair is sponsored by Simplicity Attractions Unlimited of New York. 10:00 p.m. - 3:00 a.m. The Marc Ballroom, 27 Union Square West between 15th & 16th St., New York. After Five attire, $30.00. Contact Bess Knowing, (718) 992-9073

# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## MARCH

2 • Salute to Zora Neale Hurston by Alma Vineyard of Clark University at Charis Books & More - 7:30 p.m.

3 • The River's Edge Campground presents an open house party. All are welcome. For info/directions call (706) 213-8081

4 • Positive Black Lesbians United meet for a fun night of bowling at Express Lanes - 7:00 to 10:00 p.m. (404) 874-5703

5 • Mark Louganis will sign his new book, "Breaking the Surface" at Outwrite Bookstore and Coffeehouse, 3:00 - 4:00 p.m. 931 Monroe Ave.

6 • Brother's Back-2-Back meets to rally HIV/AIDS support primarily for men of color EACH Monday evening, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., 1023 Dill Ave. (404) 756- 9202

7 • Care Time, a care givers support group meets EACH Tuesday evening, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.. These are ministers, counselors, doctors, directors, and other workers. Our Cousin's house, 1023 Dill Ave. (404) 756-9202

8 • Friends assemble men and women who are HIV+ EACH Wednesday and Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Our Cousin's House, 1023 Dill Ave. (404) 756-9202

9 • The Natural Healer's Network, Inc. presents Aromatherapy; "Gateways to Renewing Our Lives". Fulton County Public Library, main auditorium, 6:45 p.m.

10 • Sisters of Thirty Something Special discuss "The Effects of the Ex", 7:00 p.m. At Revolution on Pharr Rd., (404) 997-6240

11 • Open House - Donor Appreciation Day at Our Cousin's House, 1023 Dill Ave., 2:00 - 6:00 p.m. (404) 758-9202

12 • E. Lynn Harris will read from and sign "Just As I Am" at Outwrite Bookstore and Coffeehouse at 7:30 p.m.; 931 Monroe Dr., Atlanta

23 • The National Healer's Network, Inc. presents "Healing Relationships". Fulton County Public Library, main auditorium, 6:45 p.m.

25 • Safer Sex for Us...Women! A discussion sponsored by Sisters of Thirty Something Special, 7:00 p.m. at Revolution, Pharr Rd.

28 • Jackie Woodson, winner of two Library Association Awards, reads from "Autobiography of a Family Photo", Charis Books and More, 7:00 p.m. 1189 Euclid Ave.

30 • Sybil Washington & Angela Parker will read from "It Happens", (child sexual abuse). Important discussion follows. Charis Books and More, 7:30 p.m.

31 • Sister Bowl at Express Lanes, 7:30 p.m., Sisters of Thirty Something Special, sponsors.

31 • African American Outreach, meeting at Aid Atlanta, call for details. 872-0600

31 • The High Museum of Art & Image Film & Video presents filmmaker Lucy Massy Phenix in person. 8:00 p.m. (404) 352-4225

## APRIL

1 • Gay Spirit Vision presents Our Second Annual Spring Gathering, 8:00 p.m. (404) 284-4286

# The 411 ON ATLANTA'S BLACK GAY NITE LIFE

# Going Out Tonight?

| BARS | LOCATION | BEST NITE | MIX | MUSIC |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| WAREHOUSE (TRAXX) | 306 Luckie St. (404) 577-9510 | Sat. | Men 80% Women 20% | House |
| WATERWORKS CAFE | 111 Luckie St. (404) 577-7059 | Sun. Fri. | Men 70% Women 30% | R&B House Show |
| PEARL GARDEN | 111 Luckie St. (404) 524-0036 | Thurs. | Men 95% Women 5% | R&B Show |
| THE OTHERSIDE | 1924 Piedmont Rd. (404) 875-5238 | Wed. | Women 50% Men 50% Show | House R&B |
| THE MARQUETTE LOUNGE | M.L. King Jr. Dr. (404) 525-7677 | Sat. | Men 50% Women 50% Show | Top 40 R&B |
| LORETTA'S | 708 Spring St. (404) 874-8125 | Fri., Sat. | Men 60% Women 40% | House |


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# ORGANIZATIONS

*Send us your info! Additions, deletions, corrections, or expansions may be faxed to: (404) 622-8089 or mail to Venus Magazine, P.O. Box 89238, Atlanta, Georgia 30312*

**African Ancestral Lesbians United for Societal Change** (Formerly Salsa Soul), (212) 620-7310, Candice
**African American Lesbian Gay Alliance (AALGA)**, (404) 659-5251
**Aids Education Services for Minorities (AESM)** P.O. Box 87277, Atlanta, GA, 30337., (404) 753-2900, (404) 743-7733
**Asians and Friends/Atl**., P.O. Box 13072, Atlanta, GA, 30324, (404) 876-9800 fax: (404) 876-0090
**Black Lesbian Gay Pride Inc., (BLGP Inc.)**, P.O. Box 7184, Washington D.C. 20024
**Black Gay & Lesbian Leadership Forum**, 1219 S. La Brea Ave., Los Angeles, Ca. 90019, (213) 964-7820 fax: (213) 964-7830
**Black & White Men Together**, P.O. Box 1334, Atlanta, Ga. 30301-1334, (404) 892-BWMT
**Black Lesbians With Children**, (404) 498-3815
**Boyz of Distinction**, P.O. Box 78091, Atlanta, Ga. 30532
**Brothers Back-2-Back, Inc.,** An African-American HIV/AIDS Organization. P.O. Box 11366, Atlanta, Georgia 30310, Voice: (404) 593-5805
**Gay Black Female, G.B.F.**, 6312 Hollywood Blvd., Suite 114, Hollywood, California 90028 (310) 288-6315
**The Gay and Lesbian Center**, 208 W. 13th St., N.Y., N.Y. 10011.
**Gay/Lesbian Latino/a Comm. Organization. Out Reach Inc.**, (404) 346-3922, 1(800) 441-2437
**Home Free Ministry**, P.O. Box 688, Atlanta, Ga. 30301, (404) 818-2033
**Hospitality Atlanta**, (404) 627-1630
**Lambada Car Club/Dogwood Region**, (404) 901-9447
P.O. Box 11705, Atlanta, Ga. 30355
**Las Buenas Amigas**, (210) 868-7816, Carmen, The Gay and Lesbian Center, 208 W. 13th. St. N.Y., N.Y.10011
**Latinos En Accion**, P.O. Box 15388, Atlanta, Ga. 30325, (404) 621-5743
**Lesbians Latinos en Nuestro Ambiente**, (707) 292-7705
**LLEGO, National Latino/a Lesbian & Gay Organization**, P.O. Box 44483, Washington D.C. 20026
**National Assoc. Black & White Men Together**, 1747 Connecticut Ave., Washington, D.C. 20020, (202) 462-3599
**National Black Women's Health Project**, 1237 Gordon S.W., Atlanta, Ga., (404) 758-9590
**Positive Black Lesbians United (PBL)**, P.O. Box 655, Avondale Estates, Ga. 30002, (404) 250-7950
**Second Sunday Discussion Group**, P.O. Box 1574, Decatur, Ga. 30031, (404) 629-0583
**Silver Fingers Prod**., (404)388-4624
**Sisters of 30 Something Special**, (404) 997-6240
**Sister Love Inc**., (404) 753-7733, (404) 753-1500
**Spelman College Lesbian Bi-sexual Alliance**, 710 Peachtree St. Suite 126, Atlanta, Ga. 30308, (404) 524-8639
**Viva! Lesbian & Gay Latino, Arts Organization**, (213) 953-1970
**WRFG RADIO, Gay Graffiti, *w/ Deborah Paget***, Thurs. 7-8 p.m., **CROSSROADS**, w/ Baldeli Jones, 3rd Thurs. 7-8 p.m.**Sister Love, *Sister's Time*** 6:00 p.m., Thursdays; **AESM *Radio Outreach Show***, 2nd & 4th Friday at 6:00 p.m.
**ZAMI**, (404) 370-1392

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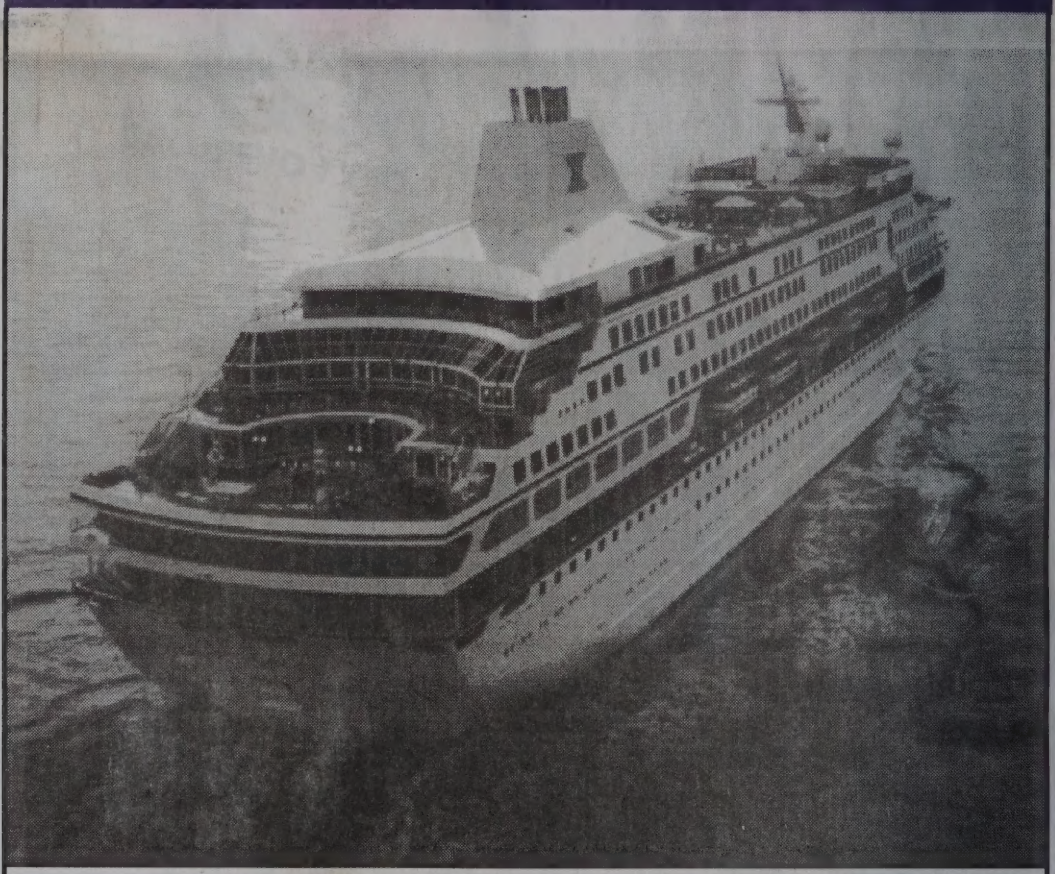

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